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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**ADAPTIVE COIN IN SRI LANKA: WHAT  
CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEMISE OF THE LTTE?**

by

Eranda Malaka Chandradasa

June 2012

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Douglas Borer  
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**ADAPTIVE COIN IN SRI LANKA: WHAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEMISE  
OF THE LTTE?**

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Lieutenant, Sri Lanka Navy  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Government of Sri Lanka declared victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009, putting an end to a conflict of thirty years. The sudden demise of the LTTE, one of the most ruthless yet successful insurgent organizations, is worth understanding. This thesis attempts to do this by exploring the internal political dynamics, external influence on the conflict, and the Sri Lankan military's adaptations in order to determine what contributed to the demise of the LTTE. This thesis will argue that one of the most critical aspects of success for the government and its military was learning from adversity and from the LTTE, and adapting the political and military organizations of Sri Lanka. By becoming fast-adapting organizations, both the government as a whole and the military, in particular, managed to conduct a successful counterinsurgency campaign that eventually ended the LTTE and eliminated its leadership.



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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CDF	Civil Defense Force
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CFA	Cease Fire Agreement
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna
LRRP	Long Range Recce Patrols
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SBS	Special Boat Squadron
SF	Special Forces
SLAF	Sri Lankan Armed Forces
TULF	Tamil United Liberation Front
UK	United Kingdom (Great Britain)
UNP	United National Party



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

Sri Lanka has 2,500 years of recorded history, the most recent 500 years of which consists of chronicles of the country's successive colonization by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British from 1505 until 1948, at which time it gained its independence. The newly independent nation retained the name Ceylon until the 1972 constitution stated that the country would be renamed Sri Lanka.

The ethnic make-up of the island nation is comprised of 72% Sinhalese, 18% Tamils (12% Sri Lankan Tamils and 6% Indian Tamils), 7% Muslims, 1% Malays and 2% other. Sri Lanka is predominantly a Buddhist country; the religious make-up of Sri Lanka consists of Buddhists at 70%, Hindus at 16%, Islamists at 7%, Christians at 6%, and other at 1%, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

Politically, Sri Lanka has 25 districts under 9 provinces (refer to Figure 1). The citizens living in the Northern and Eastern provinces are predominantly Tamil and the Sinhalese dominate the other seven provinces. Sri Lanka is located in close proximity to India. Its location in the Indian Ocean on the sea communication lines that connect the west to the east gives the island nation a strategic importance (refer to Figure 2).

Since independence, Sri Lankan politics have been strongly democratic, but fractured along ethnic and class lines. The country has a multiparty system in which two major parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), have alternated rule-forming coalitions with the minor parties. A third major party, which came into the mainstream politics only recently, is the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). After attempting two armed insurrections in 1971 and 1983 to replace the governments in power with their own Marxist-based government, the JVP gave up arms. Ethnically aligned politics has been also a major part in Sri Lankan politics, where the

---

<sup>1</sup> "Background Note: Sri Lanka," U.S. Department of State, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, accessed on April 10, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5249.htm>.

two major parties have always depended on minor ethnic Tamil and Muslim political leaders support to form coalition governments.

Tensions between the Tamil minority and the Sinhala majority gave rise to an insurgent organization, at times considered the most ruthless terrorist organization in the world, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Backed by a widespread and wealthy international Tamil population, the LTTE was initially perceived by the world as the true representation of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. The LTTE conducted more suicide attacks than any other terrorist group in the world; they murdered a former Indian Premier in 1991 and a Sri Lankan president 1993; and they killed or maimed many other high-valued targets. At the group's peak strength in 2005, the LTTE's order of battle included land, naval, and air forces, and an elite unit of trained suicide bombers. The Tiger's military success forced the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) into conceding territory to the LTTE's control and, in 2002; the LTTE forced the GoSL into negotiations.

In 2006, after the failures of a fourth peace negotiation attempt facilitated by Norway, the current GoSL under President Mahinda Rajapaksa, initiated a full-scale counterinsurgency (COIN) operation to fight the LTTE both militarily and politically. By May 2009, the LTTE had lost its leadership and had been defeated on the battlefield.

## **B. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

This study will explore the Sri Lankan situation through the eyes of political change, external influence, and military developments from Sri Lankan Independence in 1948 to the demise of the LTTE in 2009. This study will attempt to explain the accelerated and unprecedented demise of the LTTE during its last years (2006–2009). The primary research question is: What contributed to the demise of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam?

Counterinsurgency (COIN) has been a major topic in world military and political thinking recently. The demise of the LTTE and the successes of the GoSL and Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) are notable in this context. As such a secondary question is: Are the variables that contributed to this LTTE demise unique or reproducible?

### C. LITERATURE REVIEW

In terms of empirical analysis of the Tamil populace, K. M. De Silva, a prominent Sinhalese research professor, has written many publications on this topic. His books layout an understanding and experience of the Tamil people and thereby the Tamil militancy's claim for a separate state.<sup>2</sup> He also portrays a Sinhalese perspective of the situation. De Silva believes that the Tamil peoples' reluctance to accept their status as a minority led to the division in the country. He also addresses India's involvement with the issue and the resulting implications from the Sri Lankan point of view.<sup>3</sup>

While De Silva provides a Sinhalese perspective, there are a prominent number of Tamil intellectuals covering the alternative ethnic viewpoint. Publications by Chelvadurai Manogaran, a Malaysian-born Sri Lankan Tamil who is a prominent professor in Sri Lanka, explains the rise of the ethnic conflict and also forwards the notion that the only viable solution would be a federal state solution.<sup>4</sup> His work also covers the historical, sociological, and political aspects of the problem from a Tamil viewpoint.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, Jayarathnam Wilson, a Jaffna-born Tamil with close ties to the first president of Sri Lanka during the initial stages of the LTTE and Tamil militancy, provides yet another account of the situation from a Tamil perspective. He argues that the unitary state of Sri Lanka or "Ceylon" was an invention of the British colonial rulers and that in the pre-colonial era the Tamil Kingdom of the North and the Sinhalese Kingdom of the South were in fact different and separate states. He also notes that the Sinhalese, by initiating movements to make Sinhalese the official language of the island and by

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2 Professor K. M. De Silva is the author of many publications on Sri Lanka, including the following: *The "Traditional Homelands" of the Tamils: Separatist Ideology in Sri Lanka: A Historical Appraisal, A History of Sri Lanka*, and *Reaping the Whirlwind: Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka*.

3 K. M. De Silva, *Regional Powers and Small State Security: India and Sri Lanka, 1977-1990* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 1-388.

4 Chelvadurai Manogaran, *The Sri Lankan Tamils: Ethnicity and Identity* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994), 1-247.

5 Ibid., 1-247.

discriminating Tamils in government employment, have shown their inability to accept Tamils as equals, and this, he argues, is a root cause for the conflict.<sup>6</sup>

From a more international perspective, R. Narayan Swamy has followed and written about the Sri Lankan situation for many years. As an Indian journalist and intellectual, his perspective was important in terms of understanding the Indian assessment of the situation in Sri Lanka. While in his early books, Swamy focused on exposing the LTTE and its leaders as a terrorist organization,<sup>7</sup> his most recent publications argued that the loss of Indian political support was a critical factor leading to the LTTE's defeat.

Brian Blodgett provided a more thorough military perspective.<sup>8</sup> As a U.S. Army officer, he analyzed the changes in technology, doctrine, and the mission of the Sri Lanka Armed forces, while providing insight into the development, transformations, and adaptation of the military from a ceremonial force to its current status. He believed that the Sri Lankan military shifted from a ceremonial force equipped by outdated equipment and doctrine to a force that was semi-modernized to handle the internal threats it faced from the 1950s to 2004. Also, LTC Raj Vijaysiri, a Sri Lanka Army officer attending the U.S. Army General Command and Staff College, argued in his thesis that the Sri Lankan government's failure to understand the internal and external political implications and to select the correct and necessary counterinsurgency strategies contributed to the initial failures the government faced in the war.

More recently, U.S. Army Major Steven Battle wrote his master's thesis on the demise of the LTTE while attending the Naval Postgraduate School in 2009. He highlighted the importance of legitimacy for an insurgency to gain victory. He contended

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6 A. Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988).

7 R. Narayan Swamy has followed the Sri Lankan conflict for Indian and other international publications. His publications include: *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* and *Inside an Elusive Mind: Prabhakaran*.

8 Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka's Military: The Search for a Mission, 1949–2004* (San Diego, CA: Aventine Press, 2004).

that the LTTE distanced itself from its local population support because of its actions and, by doing so, lost political legitimacy that was needed to sustain the insurgency.<sup>9</sup>

While this thesis will not compete with any of the preceding arguments, it will explore the possibility of looking at this situation in Sri Lanka within the context of the general COIN principals and theories that are present in today's global arena. From a theoretical perspective, this thesis will draw implications from the COIN literature. In particular, this thesis will focus on how insurgencies are defeated in order to understand what the Sri Lankan experience can tell us about COIN.

## **1. Political Willpower and Stability**

Generally speaking, understanding how insurgencies come to an end became more important after the end of the Cold War. This can be attributed to the de-emphasis on conflicts between nation states and the rapid rise of non-state actors or “insurgents” against nation states. Recently, low intensity conflicts between states and non-state actors have become more relevant than state versus state conflicts. For this reason, the wealth of literature and knowledge on insurgencies and counterinsurgencies (COIN) is vast and varied. But, as mentioned in RAND's<sup>10</sup> publication, the “contemporary discourse on the subject is voluminous and often contentious.”<sup>11</sup> The same research noted that there was no single COIN approach that alone guaranteed success. The RAND research team, led by Christopher Paul, stated, “this means rejecting out of hand any proposal or plan that emphasizes a single COIN approach or other ‘magic bullet’ at the expense of other positive practices.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, successful COIN synchronized multiple practices that were customized for that specific campaign.<sup>13</sup>

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9 Stephen L. Battle, “Lessons in legitimacy the LTTE end game of 2007–2009” (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010).

10 RAND Corporation (Research and Development) used to be the think tank of the United States Military, and is now a nonprofit organization.

11 Christopher Paul, *Victory has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010).

12 Ibid.

13 Ben Connable, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010).



Gordon McCormick suggested that the most important action in a COIN environment is the control of the population. He argued that whoever gained the majority control of the population would win the power struggle.<sup>14</sup> Ben Connable's RAND research team contradicted this notation arguing that tangible political support was often more important than popular support in COIN.<sup>15</sup> Any insurgency needs a source to "replenish and obtain personnel, materiel, financing, intelligence, and sanctuary."<sup>16</sup> This was identified by Connable as "tangible support,"<sup>17</sup> the securing of which was a key aspect of the success or failure of an insurgency and the ability of the COIN force to disrupt this flow of tangible support to the guerrilla force directly correlated to success in COIN.<sup>18</sup>

Andrew Mack argued that relative and asymmetric interests explained how states could lose to inferior, irregular foes. In other words, the extent of resolve or political will of a group could alter the physical symmetry of irregular warfare. While his analysis was based on industrial nations acting on expeditionary wars (the French in Algeria and the USA in Vietnam), this theory still provides a framework within which the Sri Lankan conflict can be viewed, specifically when the GoSL had to diverge its interest on to the Marxist (JVP)<sup>19</sup> uprising in the south while attacking the LTTE in the north.

## **2. Controlling External Influence**

While the above publications were used to understand the internal political aspects that contributed to the conflict in Sri Lanka and its conclusion, the following research can be used to explain the cause and effect of the external political aspects of the research. Findings by Connable's RAND research shed light on elements of external

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14 Gordon H. McCormick. "Seminar on Guerrilla Warfare" (series of lectures, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, Winter Quarter, 2011).

15 *Paul, Victory has a Thousand Fathers.*

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Janatha Vimikthi Peramuna (JVP) is currently a mainstream political party in Sri Lanka who, during the 1980s, staged an armed insurgency to overthrow the government with the aim of installing a socialist government in power.

support and their effect on the government-conducted COIN efforts. One of the findings suggested that “governments benefit from direct support but tend to lose more frequently when provided indirect support; they do slightly better with no external support at all. Once support is given, it almost always creates a dependency on the external sponsor.”<sup>20</sup>

Both Connable’s and Mao Tse-Tung’s publications underscored the importance of sanctuary. The voluntary provision of sanctuary, internal or external, directly correlated with an improved likelihood of insurgent victory. Indeed, insurgencies rarely survived or succeeded without it. Controlling external influence, both internationally and domestically, was a critical aspect of effective COIN.

### **3. Adoptive Military Strategy**

The most important aspect for Sri Lanka’s successful COIN campaign was the military. While both political stability and control over the external influence were critical, their true purpose was to provide a positive environment within which the military strategy succeeded in eliminating the LTTE.

Therefore, an ideal COIN effort began and ended in success. However, a poor start does not guarantee a poor end. According to Connable’s RAND study, the adaptability of the COIN force was the key to the success of the operation.<sup>21</sup> The same study further suggested that effective COIN practices are mutually reinforcing. Put simply, “the balance of good versus bad practices perfectly predicts outcomes.”<sup>22</sup>

Christopher Paul’s RAND publication suggested pursuing, building, and maintaining forces able to engage in multiple mutually supporting lines of operation simultaneously. Additionally, Paul recommended ensuring the positive involvement of the host-nation’s government, effectively adapting, and avoiding (and discouraging allies

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<sup>20</sup> Ben Connable, *How Insurgencies End* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Paul, *Victory has a Thousand Fathers*.

and partners from) using repression and collective punishment in COIN.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, for those using adaptive military strategies, scholars believed that a government's chances of winning increased slightly over the decade long lifespan of the modern insurgency.<sup>24</sup> Also, "insurgency is an endeavor best practiced in rural, or a mix of rural and urban, terrain."<sup>25</sup> Hence, a state's ability to dominate these spaces ensured its success.

One of the most important arguments for analyzing the military successes and failures of both the GoSL and LTTE came from Ivan Arreguin-Toft. He introduced the concept of strategic interaction that dictated that the symmetry between a powerful and weaker entity gave the powerful entity the upper hand. <sup>26</sup> If the strategic interaction was asymmetric, then the weaker entity stood a chance of victory.

Another important argument was presented by LTC John Nagl of the U.S. Army in his book *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*<sup>27</sup> Nagl, traces the organizational learning and non-learning of the British Army in Malaya and the U.S. Army in Vietnam. His intent is to make the "primary argument ...that better performance of the British army in learning and implementing a successful counterinsurgency doctrine in Malaya (as compared to the American army's failure to learn and implement successful counterinsurgency doctrine in Vietnam) is best explained by the differing organizational cultures of the two armies." Nagl argues that it is an army's ability to learn, understand, and adapt to the changes in an operational environment that determines the success or failure of that army.<sup>28</sup>

Also, based on his study of organizational culture and learning institutions, Nagl notes that "the ability of military organizations to adopt to change – whether that change occurs in military technology, in the structures of the international system, or in the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Arreguin Toft, Ivan. *How the Weak Win Wars*, *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 93–128.

<sup>27</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xxii.

<sup>28</sup> Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, xxii.

nature of war itself – is an important component of a state’s ability to guarantee its own security...”<sup>29</sup> Nagl argues that an organization’s (in this case, the military’s) ability to adapt is “the critical variable is not the nature of national government, which in most cases has little impact on which policies the military chooses to adopt. It is the organizational culture of the military institution that determines whether innovation succeeds or fails.”<sup>30</sup> He further states that “the key variable explaining when militaries will adopt to change in warfare is the creation of a consensus among the leaders of the organization that such innovation is in the long-term interests of the organization itself.”<sup>31</sup> And that, “among changes required are drastic modifications of military organizations to make their leadership more responsive to changes in their environment.”<sup>32</sup>

These observations and arguments on learning and adapting put forward by John Nagl will be helpful when putting the adaptation and transformation of the Sri Lankan situation in to perspective.

#### **4. The Missing Element**

It should be noted that the historical literature on COIN in Sri Lanka is very comprehensive. However, what is missing is an organized analysis of the Sri Lankan COIN efforts using these already established theories to understand the LTTE’s demise and how the special operations conducted by the GoSL military brought it about.

#### **D. METHODOLOGY**

In answering the primary question of this thesis, this study will examine the role of political will, stability, and legitimacy, the effects of external influence, and the use of adaptive military strategy. This thesis will review the political, economic, social, and military changes in Sri Lanka in relation to this conflict from pre-LTTE Tamil militancy in 1948 to the final war effort of the 2006–2009 period. This research will employ a

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<sup>29</sup> Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 214.

<sup>30</sup> Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 215.

<sup>31</sup> Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 216.

<sup>32</sup> Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 218.

historical case study methodology. In order to address the core question, it is necessary to understand, and have a general theoretical means to narrow down and guide the research. To this end, this study will attempt to generate this lens using the already established studies on COIN and insurgency.

## **E. THESIS ORGANIZATION**

Chapter II examines the chronological sequence of events with regard to the internal political dynamics of the country. Chapter III examines the chronological sequence of events with regard to external influences and changes with respect to the conflict. Chapter IV examines the adaptations and transformations that the military underwent. Chapter V presents my analysis of the changes and their effect on demise of the LTTE and my conclusion.



Figure 1. Administrative Map of Sri Lanka (image from The Nations Online Project, <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/index.html>)

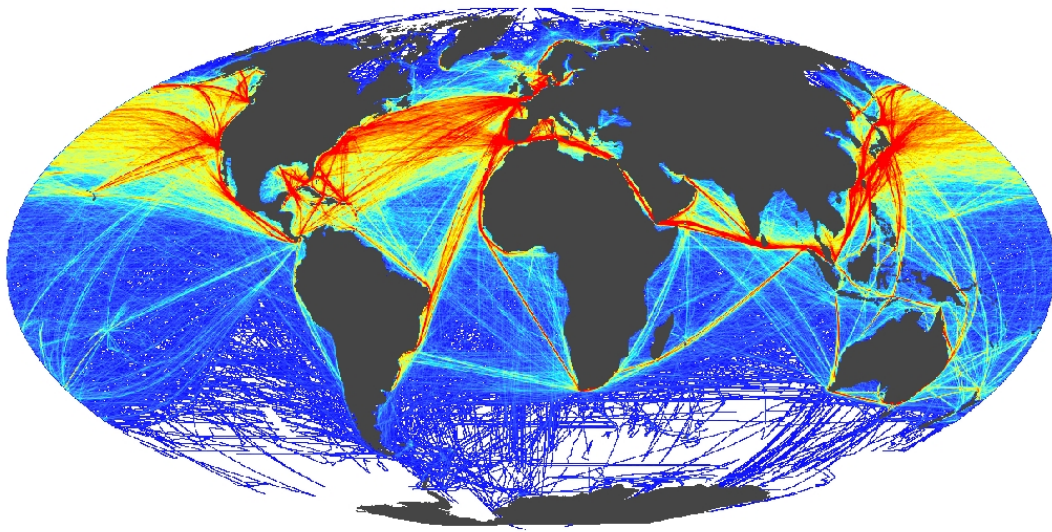


Figure 2. International Sea Routes (From Sea Web, <http://www.seaweb.org/about.php>)

## II. INTERNAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS

This chapter intends to explore the changes in the internal political dynamic of Sri Lanka, which at times hindered and at times supported the LTTE's cause and which eventually allowed for a political environment that was favorable to the government's COIN efforts. This section discusses domestic politics, and leaves out the external, global, and regional political changes which will be discussed in a later chapter. With this in mind, it is necessary to realize that these two very interconnected topics have been separated for the goal of simplification and so that the situation can be better understood. The reality is that the internal politics of any country is influenced by the global and regional political situation. Additionally, tracing and presenting every political event spanning almost seven decades is impossible for a study of this nature. As such, this chapter only examines the primary events in order to understand changes in the internal political situation that paved the way for the defeat of the LTTE and the military success of the GoSL's COIN initiatives.

Unlike the countries surrounding the island, the struggle for independence in Sri Lanka can be seen as more subdued and diplomatic than a typical revolution. In fact, many have argued that in 1948 Sri Lanka received only a limited independence. Countries surrounding the island, such as neighboring India, saw much more blood, and aggression, while Sri Lanka's nationalist leaders engaged more in dialogue and politics to gain what can be described as partial independence at the time. And while, in 1948 Ceylon did become a dominion of the British Commonwealth, it took several decades more for it to become an independent republic of its own.<sup>33</sup>

Different ethnic identities in Sri Lanka are "hierarchically nested segments" which run parallel to each other.<sup>34</sup> Although there are a number of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka (i.e., the Sinhalese, the Sri Lankan Tamils, the Sri Lankan Muslims, the Tamils of

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<sup>33</sup> Kingsley De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 601 – 605.

<sup>34</sup> Charles F. Keyes, "Towards a new formulation of the concept of ethnic group," *Ethnicity* 03, (1976): 202–213.



Indian Origin, the Burghers, the Veddhas (believed to be the aboriginal people of Sri Lanka), the Malays, and many more others), the most significant socio-ethnic division in Sri Lankan society is between the numerical majority, the Sinhalese, and the numerical minority, the Sri Lankan Tamils.<sup>35</sup> Over the years, tensions between these two groups escalated into a conflict of opinion about the Sri Lankan state. It was this conflict of opinion that escalated into violence from the 1970s onwards. Sri Lankan historian K. M. De Silva aptly captured this conflict of opinion when he described Sri Lanka's political reality as:

The Sinhalese, the majority group in the island, and the Sri Lankan Tamils, the island's most significant minority, have sharply different perceptions on the nature of the Sri Lankan State; and diametrically opposed attitudes to decentralization and devolution of power to regional units of administration.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils, the other two major minority groups, the Tamils of Indian origin and the Sri Lankan Muslims, have their own perceptions about and grievances in relation to the Sri Lankan State. Historically, the Tamils of Indian Origin have had grievances over a denial of citizenship, and the Sri Lankan State's ability to uplift them from a vulnerable socioeconomic status. The Sri Lankan Muslims, on the other hand, wish to have safeguards over their rights in geographical "pocket" areas in which they are a majority surrounded by high percentages of national and regional Sinhala or Tamil populations.

If the Sri Lankan state was structured in a manner that addressed these grievances and accommodated differences of opinion in its policy-making mechanisms, a thirty-year civil war might have been avoided. Instead, the Sri Lankan state was inadequately structured to deal with social, economic, and political inequalities in an equitable manner, thus resulting in ethnic tension between the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamils, while dragging the Tamils of Indian Origin, the Sri Lankan Muslims, and other ethnicities into

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<sup>35</sup> P. Peebles, "Colonization and Ethnic Conflict in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 1 (1990): 30–55.

<sup>36</sup> K. M. De Silva, "Sri Lanka's Prolonged Ethnic Conflict: Negotiating a Settlement," *International Negotiation* 06, no. 3 (2001): 437–469.

a “conflict of nationality.” By not addressing these inequalities over a long period of time, the result was the ethno-political groups entrenched themselves in different opinions over what the nature of the Sri Lankan state. These groups also held diametrically opposed attitudes towards decentralization and devolution.

The modern beginnings of these tensions go back to the origin of Sri Lanka’s democratization process, when Sri Lanka became the first British crown colony to enjoy universal suffrage in 1931.<sup>37</sup> Since being given independence in 1948, there have been key periods that have marked major changes in relations between Sri Lanka’s ethnic groups. While this had been a major political issue since the 1920s, even for its British Colonial rulers, the problem seemed headed for an “amicable settlement.”<sup>38</sup> G.G. Ponnambalam, who led the Tamil cause since his election to the State Council in 1934, became a member of the Cabinet in the post-independent government. Doing so, he managed to absorb a significant portion of the leadership of the Tamil Congress into the government. By forming the United National Party (UNP), D.S. Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, managed to consolidate mutually exclusive nationalist movements into a single unit of cohesion. While the UNP from its inception had the approval of the influential Christian minority, it had no such ties with the Sinhala Buddhist majority. This deficiency was lessened by S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake’s decision to absorb his Sinhala Maha Sabha (translation: Great Sinhala Assembly) into the UNP. Also the Muslim community, which had earlier not distinguished itself as a separate unit and had backed the Tamils, now established themselves as a separate minority and sought association with the party.<sup>39</sup>

In 1948, the Tamil Congress crossed over to the government and UNP. With this addition D.S. Senanayake found the consolidation he was looking for. But this consolidation of many elements of nationalism under one flag, the flag of “Sri Lankan Nationalism,” was fragile; the reasons being the conflicts in the varied interests of all the

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37 K. M. De Silva, *Universal Franchise, 1931–1981: The Sri Lankan Experience* (Colombo: Dept. of Information, Ministry of State, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 1981).

38 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 601.

39 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 601.

parties involved, and the fact that the frictions between the majority and the main minority could not coheres. The main challenge to this fragile alliance achieved by D.S. Senanayake and the UNP was when S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake and his supporters in the parliament crossed over to the opposition in 1951.<sup>40</sup>

In September 1951, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) was initiated under S.W.R.D Bandaranayake's leadership. This "centrist political force ...deliberately sought to become the focal point of all interest groups who were dissatisfied with the UNP, and at the same time was opposed to the Marxist solution to the country's problems."<sup>41</sup> This group became the alternative to both the centralist UNP and the Marxist left. It also became the focal point for the Sinhala Buddhist activists, as both UNP and the left seemed unsympathetic toward their religious, linguistic, and cultural aspirations. The majority Sinhala Buddhist population, long dormant and under the belief that both colonial rulers and the post-independent government had unjustly sidelined them, were now building a stronghold of power within the democratic electoral system where their numbers gave them the upper-hand over all other groups. And while S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake and the SLFP were leading this movement, with the entrance of the Sinhala Buddhist's into the political arena, the vision of Sri Lankan nationalism and a secular state with multiracial politics was dying.<sup>42</sup>

The issues of the Sinhalese educated elite helped motivate the emergence of Sinhalese nationalism, which both of the main political parties realized, but the Bandaranayake-led SLFP managed to capitalize on this understanding since the UNP was late to address it: "The Sinhala educated intelligentsia found that the rewarding careers were closed to them by the pervasive dominance of English as the language of administration."<sup>43</sup> The Sinhala majority also felt that "the Tamil community had taken an unfair share of power by virtue of its superior educational opportunities."<sup>44</sup> The same

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40 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 602–612.

41 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 609.

42 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 610.

43 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 613.

44 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 613.

population demographic was predominantly Buddhist in religion and believed that “in its spiritual home Theravada Buddhism and culture associated with it were not receiving sufficient support or respect.”<sup>45</sup> This transformation of nationalist feeling from one that encompassed all of Sri Lanka’s ethnic and religious groups to Sinhala–Buddhist Nationalism affected all ethnic and religious groups in Ceylon, but mostly the Sinhalese and Tamils sects. In his article, “Power Sharing as Peace Structure: The Case of Sri Lanka,” conflict theorist Johan Galtung explains that in the process of state formation, “the problem is, to whom does the state belong?”<sup>46</sup> This question is easily answered for the “mono-national state but problematic for the multinational state”<sup>47</sup> such as Sri Lanka.

During the 1950s period of independence, state government was eager, if not hasty, in the structuring of the State. The problem, as it would appear, was two-fold. On one hand, the main minority, the Sri Lankan Tamils, felt left out of all major decision-making processes during and after the British rule, on the other hand, so did the majority Sinhalese. The English language requirement had limited the political and social domains to a group of few elite English-educated and English-speaking groups. As Galtung explains, because of the sheer complexity of State formation, usually a nationalistic view is taken: “State formation was in most cases a brutal process as the dominant nation took possession of a state as its home.”<sup>48</sup> The UNDP Human Development Report from 2004 offers a survey of methods still being used in state formation. These include:

- Adoption of official-language laws,
- Construction of nationalized systems of compulsory education, and
- Diffusion of the dominant group's language and culture.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 613.

<sup>46</sup> Johan Galtung, "Power Sharing As Peace Structure: The Case of Sri Lanka" (IICP working paper, Institute for Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peace building, 2005), accessed February 16, 2012, <http://www.iicp.at/communications/publications/papers/WP2SLpower%20sharing.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Johan Galtung, “Power Sharing As Peace Structure,” 06.

<sup>48</sup> Johan Galtung, “Power Sharing As Peace Structure,” 06.

<sup>49</sup> United Nations Development Program (UNDP), "Cultural liberty in today's diverse world" (UNDP Report, UNDP New York, 2004), accessed on February 16, 2012, [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr04\\_complete.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr04_complete.pdf).

These methodologies were evidenced in Sri Lanka by Bandaranayake's pro-Sinhalese-Buddhist ideology, which gathered the majority's support and where the pro-multiracial, pro-multilingual conceptualization of the UNP was found wanting. Eager to not lose its stronghold, the UNP later switched over toward a narrower Sinhala-only attitude. However the politically motivated switch did not gain the approval of the country's majority, resulting in the new S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake-led coalition of SLFP and other parties, such as the "Lanka Sama Samaja Pakshaya" (Lanka Socialist Party or LSSP) and the "Mahajana Ekshath Peramuna" (MEP or the People's United Front) coming into power in 1956. The common motivation within this coalition was the commitment to Sinhala as the official language and the populist program of social and economic change. The UNP, with its late revision to Sinhala as the official language, had lost its Tamil Congress support in the North of the country, in turn making the Tamil Federal Party (the breakaway fraction of G.G. Ponambalam's Tamil Congress) the dominant force in the North. For the Sinhalese majority, this transformation, or interchangeability of the concept of Sri Lankan Nationalism, with Sinhala-Buddhist Nationalism was justified for two major reasons:

- In Sinhala the words for nation, race, and people are practically synonymous. Therefore the concept of a multi-communal nation-state reflected an incomprehensible notion. The unique, unparalleled historic context of the country and its strong identification as the land where Buddhism flourished in its purest form had become important to its people culturally, ideologically, and emotionally.
- The State-formation and politics allowed for the long ignored majority to justify the laying aside of the multiracial model of democracy and instead paved the way for a closed, exclusive Sinhala model.<sup>50</sup>

As the Sinhalese nationalist movement grew, so did the Tamil's, mainly the Federal Party who "refused to endorse the assumption that Sinhalese Nationalism was interchangeable with the larger Sri Lankan Nationalism."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 627–630.

<sup>51</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 627.

Prior to this period, Leftist parties, led by N.M Perera had since 1936 voiced support for the replacement of English, with both Sinhala and Tamil as the official languages of the country. But in 1944, it was J.R Jayawardana of the UNP (who later became the first Executive President of Sri Lanka) who had filed a motion to replace English as the official language of the country. In 1956, the Bandaranayake government brought forward the Official Language Act, introducing it to the House of Representatives. As the Sinhala - Buddhist majority of the country was the singular driving force behind S.W.R.D Bandaranayake's political success, the Official Language Act could not escape the pressures of that majority. Consequently the Official Language act was amended to replace English with Sinhala alone, rather than both Sinhala, and Tamil as the leftist parties had first suggested. The bill was passed with the support of the SLFP, and the UNP. The leftist LSSP, and Communist Party as well as the Tamil nationalist parties (Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi [ITAK—Federal Party] and the All Ceylon Tamil Congress) opposed it.<sup>52</sup>

Popular opposition to the bill resulted in riots. The situation forced the government to postpone the full implementation of the legislation until January 1961. As means of resolving the growing tensions, Bandaranayake secured parliamentary approval of the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act, which granted “reasonable” use of the Tamil Language in administration. During this time, the Tamil Federal Party (ITAK) demanded the right to self-administration of the Northern and Eastern provinces under a federalist constitution, for the satisfactory solution to the problem of settlement of Indian Tamil plantation workers within the island.<sup>53</sup>

The request by the Tamil Federal Party triggered what can only be described as a “Sinhalese minority complex.” While it is true that the Sinhalese enjoyed a majority of over 70%<sup>54</sup> within the island, Tamils had always been seen as a majority in this specific border region (the Indian subcontinent), with Sinhalese being outnumbered almost four to

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<sup>52</sup> De Silva, K.M. and Howard Wriggins, *J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka: A Political Biography, Vol. I, 1906-1956* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1988).

<sup>53</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 630.

<sup>54</sup> “Population by Sex, Age, Religion, Ethnicity, According to District and D.S. Division,” Department of Census & Statistics Sri Lanka.

one. The claim for Federalist control of the North and East by the Tamil political parties increased the concern of the Sinhalese that a Tamil majority would gain power within the island. Sri Lanka's Northern region's close proximity to Tamil Nadu, India coupled with the Federal Party's outline of plans caused panic among the Sinhalese.<sup>55</sup>

With this state of affairs as the backdrop, Banadaranayake and S.V. Chelvanayagam, then leader of the Tamil Federal Party (considered to be the father of the Tamil Eelam [homeland] concept), held negotiations regarding the issue. The result was the Banadaranayake-Chelvanayagam pact. The main compromises agreed upon included,

- The Tamil Language becoming an official language for administration in the North and East.
- As a concession to the federal demand, a scheme of devolving administrative powers to regional councils.
- Restrictions on the settlement of Sinhalese in Northern and Eastern province irrigation schemes (the new irrigation schemes re-routed the largest river and, with it, forced the farmers to relocate around the new route).<sup>56</sup>

While parties such as the UNP, who strived to recover from their loss of support from the Sinhala—Buddhist majority, vehemently opposed the pact, resistance also came from within Bandaranayke's own party (the Sinhalese extremist). Therefore, the pact had to be revoked by the administration due to opposition within the country. This also gave birth to the claim that the only solution was for there to be a separate state and that, inside Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese majority would not allow for the Tamil minority to hold the same status/standing as the Sinhalese. It was a claim that was voiced by many prominent Tamil advocates at the time and would later come to be the slogan of the LTTE terrorist organization. This claim would come to be known as the claim to Tamil Eelam [Tamil Homeland].<sup>57</sup>

While the country remained in this fragile and insecure state, S.W.R.D Bandaranayake was assassinated by a Buddhist monk who shot the Prime Minister on 25

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<sup>55</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 629.

<sup>56</sup> "Bandaranaike – Chelvanayakam Pact," Peace in Sri Lanka, accessed February 17, 2012, <http://www.peaceinsrilanka.org/negotiations/bc-pact>.

<sup>57</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 628–680.

September 1959 at his private residence. After Bandaranaike's death, Wijeyananda Dahanayake, Minister of Education and the Leader of the House, took over as acting Prime Minister after being appointed by the Ceylonese parliament. However, uneasy politics (where much of the leadership of the party was not in line with his own policies and thinking) caused him to fall out of favor with the members of the government. The consequence was the removal of all ministers of Bandaranaike's cabinet in less than a year. Leadership of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party eventually fell into the hands of Bandaranaike's widow, Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike, who was appointed as a Member of Parliament. She became the world's first female Prime Minister when the Samagi Peramuna [United Front] coalition, led by the SLFP, won elections in July 1960.<sup>58</sup>

In 1970, when Sirimavo Bandaranaike came back into power,<sup>59</sup> the Federal Party (ITAK) submitted a new set of proposals to the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs for a federal form of government. The following points characterized the submission:

- An autonomous Tamil state,
- An autonomous Muslim state, and
- Three autonomous Sinhalese states and a Tamil Language Regulation Act.

All of these proposals were rejected, leading to further frustration among the Sri Lankan Tamil ethno-polity.<sup>60</sup> Strikingly, however, it was not the Sri Lankan Tamils who first took up arms against the government in Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese uprising by the “Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna” (JVP or People’s Liberation Front) happened in 1971. JVP, referred to as Che’s Boys (in reference to Ernesto “Che” Guevara), followed a Marxism-Leninism ideology. The two main characteristics of this insurrection were that it was fundamentally a youth-led movement and that it consisted of individuals from highly vulnerable segments of the population who felt that they had been isolated from State power and the socioeconomic development process of the Sri Lankan State.

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<sup>58</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 660–662.

<sup>59</sup> Sirimavo Banadaranayake was in power from 1960 to 1965 and was again elected into power in 1970 when the same Sinhalese–Buddhist movement that helped her late husband into power, backed her.

<sup>60</sup> Nadesan Satyendra, “A Record of Broken Pacts & Evasive Proposals,” last modified December 11, 2007, <http://tamilnation.co/conflictresolution/tamileelam/index.htm#1970%20Proposals>.



Moreover its members felt that the Nation's Leftist coalitions would never provide for its own aspirations and development. The insurrection aimed to seize power from the government by taking up arms. The Sri Lankan State ruthlessly crushed them. In 1972, the United Front government introduced the new constitution of Sri Lanka, which in effect moved Sri Lanka away from the Dominion status of the British Commonwealth toward the "Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka."<sup>61</sup>

With the establishment of this new constitution, the Sri Lankan government further complicated relations with minorities in the following respects:

- Chapter II of the constitution stated "the Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly, it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Articles 10 and 14(1)(e)," and
- The Constitution reaffirmed a previous bill which made Sinhala the language of the State.<sup>62</sup>

The majority Sinhalese supported this constitution, and even the UNP supported its cause. Additionally, the Roman Catholics and Christian minorities succumbed to its ruling, not attempting to oppose the status given to Buddhism.<sup>63</sup> The reasoning behind this inaction was based on a loosely acknowledged acceptance that prevailing politics adhered to the dominant majority alone. But for the main minority, the Tamils, these moves reconfirmed their status as what they called "second-class citizens."<sup>64</sup> The political leadership of the Tamil community, made up mostly from the Jaffna Tamil elite, had enjoyed considerable acceptance and status from the British under the colonial Ceylon where the British Empire employed a *divide-and-rule* policy. The new constitution, and subsequent opposition to it, provided the rationale to effectively unite all major Tamil political parties, including the vital two groups: the Federal Party and the Tamil Congress. This unification resulted in the forming of the Tamil United Liberation

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<sup>61</sup> "The Constitution," Official Government Web Site of Sri Lanka, last modified on November 20, 2003, <http://www.priu.gov.lk/Cons/1978Constitution/ConstitutionalReforms.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> "The Constitution," Official Government Web Site of Sri Lanka.

<sup>63</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 675.

<sup>64</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 675.

Front (TULF). This was also the first time that the Indian plantation workers joined the political mainstream of the indigenous Tamils.

The increased alienation of the Tamil people, as a result of the constitution, eventually intensified and converted a larger portion of the Northern Tamils toward the idea of a separate state. The TULF, with its dominant partner, the Federal Party, supported a separate state for the Tamil-speaking areas in the Northern and Eastern provinces.<sup>65</sup>

From 1973 onwards the island saw the emergence of embryonic Sri Lankan Tamil youth militant groups. As these groups became more established and organized, they instituted connections in the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora communities in the UK and Canada.<sup>66</sup> Some of the Sri Lankan Tamil youth organizations emerging during this period were the:

- Tamil New Tigers (TNT), later known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
- Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO)
- People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE)
- Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF)
- Eelam Revolutionary organization of Students (EROS)<sup>67</sup>

As De Silva notes, “The most militant agitators for separatism were the educated unemployed youth.”<sup>68</sup> One example of the Tamil youths’ opposition occurred when the United Front introduced changes to the university admission system, which the Tamil youth saw as a deliberate and discriminative move against them.

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<sup>65</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 674, 692.

<sup>66</sup> "Sri Lanka: Chronology," Conciliation Resources, accessed February 16, 2012, <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/sri-lanka/chronology.php>.

<sup>67</sup> The number of Tamil militant groups at this time was variable, with new groups or splinter groups of current ones emerging, but the listed groups are considered the main players that were active from the early times of the militancy to the at last the Indian Peacekeeping Force intervention.

<sup>68</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 675.

While these detrimental changes were taking root, the government itself was experiencing severe friction within the coalition. The support for the dominant SLFP was eroding and the other members of the coalition, having lost confidence in the coalition, were removing themselves from it. By the start of 1977, the coalition (aka the United Front) was no more. What remained was a single SLFP party that was about to face the general elections. On 21 July 1977, during the general elections, the UNP led by the then opposition leader J.R. Jayewardene, managed to “displace the SLFP in a landslide victory.”<sup>69</sup> This election saw a political party in Sri Lanka gaining a “clear majority of the popular vote”<sup>70</sup> where the UNP won “140 out of 168 [parliament] seats.”<sup>71</sup> Because of the country’s peculiar electoral system and because of the concentration of Tamils in the North and East electoral, the Tamil coalition (TULF) won 18 seats and “a Tamil became the opposition leader”<sup>72</sup> for the first time since Sri Lanka’s independence. The exceptional situation caused an uneasy tension in the minds of some Sinhalese and Tamils. In mid-August, amid these tensions, a minor incident in Jaffna which involved a “clash between police and a section of the people”<sup>73</sup> instigated a ferocious outbreak of communal violence between the Sinhalese and Tamils “... on a scale comparable with the riots of the mid-1950s.”<sup>74</sup> At the outset of the election and in its initial stages the Tamils had supported Jayewardene’s government (the UNP), because of its promise of “improved ethnic relations.”<sup>75</sup> Time would show that these hopes would soon be disappointed. The new government adopted yet another new constitution in 1978, in which an executive presidency was introduced. The new constitution included:

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69 David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), 5.

70 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 681.

71 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 681.

72 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 683.

73 De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 683.

74 Ibid., 683.

75 David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*, 6.

- A direct election of an Executive President,
- The upgraded status of the Tamil language: “Article 19 declared that Sinhala and Tamil shall be the national languages of Sri Lanka (with Sinhala remaining the sole official language),”<sup>76</sup>
- Proportional representation for the parliament, which was seen as a more suitable system for equal representation,
- A new system of local governments in the form of district councils,
- The removal of the citizenship issue: “Article 26 abolished the distinction between citizens by descent and citizens by registration – an irritant to the Indian Tamils - and this removed the stigma of second-class citizenship”<sup>77</sup>

The liberal, open economic policy of the government was also seen as an opportunity for the Tamils to achieve economic improvement.<sup>78</sup> The government’s educational policy also provided the Tamils with easier access to the university system. Yet, while these developments would have, in theory, improved the relations with the GoSL and the Tamil population, this was not the case. The government’s ability to implement the directives of the new constitution with regard to minority rights was met with large opposition by the extremist elements of the Sinhalese community.

The Executive Presidency introduced by the constitution concentrated a large amount of state power in the hands of the executive arm of the government, including the ability to enact a power devolution process. President Jayewardene then appointed a presidential commission to inquire and report on the creation of the District Development Councils, which was to be a scheme of power-sharing applicable to all of the twenty-four districts in Sri Lanka. It was very clear that this scheme of devolution would be done irrespective of ethnic composition, and it was not intended to provide a different political or administrative structure based on ethnicity for any particular part of the country.<sup>79</sup> This was however rejected by the Tamil polity who, along with the recognition of their cultural and ethnic identity, wanted more power within a provincial framework. The end of the 1970s marked the rise of Tamil separatist militancy and the continued

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<sup>76</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 685.

<sup>77</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 685.

<sup>78</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 6.

<sup>79</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 6.

concentration of State power into the hands of the Sinhalese. With these two opposing trends continually growing stronger something was bound to give way and, in 1983, it did.<sup>80</sup>

The militant Tamil youth movement, which was becoming more radicalized, had begun hijacking the moderate voice of the political movements. The LTTE stood out distinctively during this period because of the ideology and dedication of its founder, Velupillai Prabhakaran, and the support it received from the leadership of the TULF and the Tamil Federal Party. In 1975, the LTTE rose to prominence with its assassination of Alfred Duraipappa, the mayor of Jaffna.<sup>81</sup> Duraipappa was a moderate Tamil and a member of the SLFP party, who was democratically elected as the mayor of Jaffna, the main Tamil city on the island and the capital of the Northern Province. From its inception, the LTTE was fixed on the single goal of a separate state for the Tamil people, “Tamil Eelam,” and they would not let even one of their own get in the way. According to the Sri Lankan Defense Ministry, “this separate state was to comprise 28.7% of Sri Lanka’s landmass and 60% of its coastline.”<sup>82</sup> And, in 1983, the LTTE took action towards this separate state when Sri Lanka saw the most devastating and bloody communal violence of its history.<sup>83</sup> This event is generally believed to be the start of full-scale civil war between the LTTE, and the Sri Lankan government forces.

The event that set the stage for this act of unprecedented violence took place on 23 July 1983. The LTTE, which was swiftly becoming the most predominant Tamil militant movement in the North and East, ambushed and killed over thirteen Sri Lankan Army soldiers in Jaffna.<sup>84</sup> This attack precipitated violent and devastating riots in the southern parts of the Island. A mass funeral held for the slain soldiers at the country’s

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<sup>80</sup> De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 6.

<sup>81</sup> Defense Ministry of Sri Lanka, “Humanitarian Operation Fact Analysis” (presented to the Foreign Diplomatic Missions present in Sri Lanka outlining the Military Operation against the LTTE), [http://www.defence.lk/news/20110801\\_Conf.pdf](http://www.defence.lk/news/20110801_Conf.pdf).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Frances Harrison, “Twenty years on - riots that led to war,” BBC News: South Asia, last modified July 23, 2003, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/3090111.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3090111.stm).

<sup>84</sup> Edgar O’Ballance, *The Cyanide War: Tamil Insurrection in Sri Lanka, 1973–88* (London: Brassey’s, 1989), 21.

capital, Colombo, managed to gather a massive crowd from different parts of the country. Soon after the funeral, those present turned violent and ravaged the streets of Colombo and the suburbs in an aggressive and brutal search for the Tamil populations living there. The event would come to be known as “Black July.” The LTTE’s actions had a domino effect, which caused violence to run amuck through the country for more than thirty years. Massive numbers of Tamils living among the Sinhalese in the South began migrating to the North and East, which agitated the Tamils already living in those areas, causing them to, in turn, act violently against the Sinhalese living there. The incidents of “Black July” did more to polarize and instill hatred between the two ethnic groups than any other previous event. Moreover, it was pivotal for the LTTE to legitimize its unrestrained use of violence in the following decades.<sup>85</sup>

The same incident catalyzed an exodus of Tamil refugees who fled the country. Seeking asylum in countries such as Canada, the United States, and parts of the European Union, these populations went on to make up the international diaspora that supported the LTTE financially throughout the conflict, regardless of how brutal LTTE tactics became. The reason behind the situation was clear. These groups had left the country at the height of the Black July violence. No matter how much the dynamics changed within the country, whether or not the LTTE addressed the concerns of the Tamil communities on the ground or not, the resentment and injustice felt by these groups was harnessed. To them it seemed that what the LTTE was doing was a form of retribution. And so the foreign funding continued to flow. This marked a significant change in the Tamil political trend of thought and diplomacy. For many Tamils there was no longer hope for a political solution to military action against the GoSL. This and the escalation of military action led to the involvement of India and the Thimpu negotiations (held in Thimpu, Capital of Bhutan) and the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement of 1987 which effectively resulted in the LTTE replacing the collective Tamil political leadership as the “sole

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<sup>85</sup> Palitha M. Senanayake, *Sri Lanka: The War Fuelled By Peace* (Rajagiriya: L&L Printers, 2010), 172 –178.

representative” of the Tamils, and so, became the representative in Sinhala–Tamil relations with regard to the north and east and the Tamil Eelam.<sup>86</sup>

In 1985, there was a mutual declaration of peace and the Thimpu talks in Bhutan became the first recorded attempt at peace talks between the Sri Lankan government, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the LTTE, and other rebel groups. During these talks, it emerged that the Sri Lankan government was only offering the district to be the unit of devolution and not the province as required by the TULF and the various Tamil militant groups. As a result, the rebel groups rejected the Sri Lankan government’s proposals and the peace talks failed, plunging Sri Lanka back into violence.<sup>87</sup>

In 1989, at the end of his second term, President J.R. Jayawardene handed over the country to his then Prime Minister, Ranasinghe Premadasa. Premadasa had won the presidential elections of 1988 after defeating Sirimavo Bandaranayake of the SLFP. And by 1980, the Tamil fight was being fronted by more radical youth movements. The Indian government supported some of these movements, while the others, though not endorsed by the Indian government, had managed to amass the support of the people of Tamil Nadu. While most of these movements splintered to create more militant groups, the number of groups and their separate effect is not of great importance when considering the response of the GoSL to these early militant groups of Tamil youth.<sup>88</sup>

The events of 1983 marked a turning point in the dynamics of Sri Lanka’s discourse on ethno-political conflict. Militant separatist groups gradually edged out traditional Tamil parties and, from these groups, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) emerged the most dominant in 1986.<sup>89</sup> The LTTE confronted and annihilated

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<sup>86</sup> Chapter 3 talks in more detail about the Indian intervention.

<sup>87</sup> Senanayake, *Sri Lanka: The War Fuelled by Peace*, 51 – 60.

<sup>88</sup> Chapter III talks in more detail about the Indian intervention.

<sup>89</sup> De Silva, “Sri Lanka’s Prolonged Ethnic Conflict: Negotiating a Settlement,” 438.

virtually all their rivals among the other Tamil groups and sent what was referred to as its mentor, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), to the periphery of Tamil and Sri Lankan politics.<sup>90</sup>

One of the most significant events of this period, however, was the intervention of the Indian government in the ethnic conflict. In 1987, due to the deterioration of the ethnic conflict and a rise in human rights abuses, an accord was signed between the GOSL, the Tamil groups, and the Indian government that led the way to the creation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution. This allowed for the creation of Provincial Councils throughout Sri Lanka into which power would be devolved. Additionally, the North and East provinces were merged into one administrative entity in order to create the North Eastern Provincial Council. During this time of change, an Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) was deployed in the North and East to protect the peace. Paradoxically, a war broke out between the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) because the LTTE feared that the IPKF was encroaching upon their territory and encouraging the development of other Tamil militant groups.

In this political atmosphere, in 1987, the Marxist Sinhalese JVP (Janatha Vimukhthi Peramuna) led by Rohana Wijeweera began a campaign against the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement and started what is now known as the second JVP insurrection. This Sinhalese insurrection was distinguished from its predecessor by its strong Sinhala nationalist ideological characteristic.

Ultimately, with the election of Ranasinghe Premadasa (UNP) as President in 1988, the IPKF was withdrawn from Sri Lanka in 1990<sup>91</sup> and, in late 1989, the JVP rebellion was crushed and its leader, Wijeweera, was executed. While there was a temporary lull in fighting during 1990, what the LTTE called the ‘Second Eelam War’

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<sup>90</sup> This is confirmed by D. Jayatilleke, *The LTTE and Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka*, and in K. M. De Silva and GH Peiris (eds), *Pursuit of Peace in Sri Lanka: Past Failures and Future Prospects*, (Kandy, Sri Lanka: ICES, 2001), 231–262 and in Narayan Swamy, *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* (Delhi, India: Konark, 1994).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.



began again later that year<sup>92</sup> and in 1991, the LTTE assassinated former Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi in southern India. They also went on to assassinate Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993.<sup>93</sup>

However, in August 1991, the Parliament of Sri Lanka constituted a cross-party select committee to come up with a solution to the ethnic conflict. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party member, Mangala Munasinghe, chaired this committee, which met forty-nine times between 1991 and 1993, but the committee was unable to reach consensus other than among the two major parties (SLFP and UNP). However, Mangala Munasinghe's committee was the first time that Parliament had attempted to come up with a solution to the ethnic conflict. That being said, reports indicate that many of its members did not take the proceedings seriously and, despite the efforts of the chair, the recommendations of the commission were stratified along ethnic lines<sup>94</sup>. While the select committee deliberated on measures to strengthen power-sharing arrangements in the country and to work out a solution that accommodated the interests of all parties, the Premadasa government did not even implement the mechanisms that had been established by the constitution for this purpose.

The Transfer of Powers (Divisional Secretaries) Act of 1992 and the subject of "National Policy" were exploited for the benefit of the central government to continue its control over the provinces. Divisional secretaries (an administrative office, in which the secretary was in charge of the new divisions) were directly under the government and were headed by a Divisional Secretary appointed by the central government. This period also marked the rise to dominance of the LTTE and the "militarization" of the Sri Lankan government's administration in Tamil-dominated areas in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. In fact, it further marked the first attempt by the Parliament to bring a solution to the conflict.

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92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Rohan Edrisinha, Christian Hofer, and Lukas Probst, *Power-Sharing in Sri Lanka: Constitutional and Political Documents, 1926–2008* (Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2008), 410–413.

Marking an end to the seventeen years of UNP rule in the country, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (daughter of S.W.R.D and Sirimavo Bandaranayake) became the president of Sri Lanka in 1994 with an overwhelming majority. President Kumaratunga, who ascended to leadership of the SLFP party in 1993, had a greater influence in making fundamental strategic changes within the party and was able to persuade its members to adopt a liberal policy on the ethnic conflict. Her SLFP-led coalition, The People's Alliance (PA), campaigned on an explicit peace platform in 1994, both at the southern provincial council election and at the parliamentary and presidential elections. The PA won an overwhelming mandate for negotiations with the LTTE and for constitutional reform to establish maximum devolution. Later, the year 1994 was described as a watershed year in politics of the South, mainly because it was the first occasion in which a southern political leader won a national mandate on an explicitly peace-oriented platform for negotiations and for constitutional reforms for decentralization and devolution of powers.<sup>95</sup> President Kumaratunga's government commenced negotiations with the LTTE in late 1994, but their talks collapsed soon after and war erupted again in April of 1995. During this time, the PA government embarked on the "war for peace" strategy. It was the Kumaratunga government that first used this strategy.<sup>96</sup>

The "War for Peace" strategy called for military containment of the LTTE, whilst pursuing a vigorous program of peace-building and constitutional reform proposals aimed at winning the support of Tamil community, and thereby, the political alienation of the LTTE from its constituency. An extensive program of political education and advocacy that emphasized the need for devolution, importance of power sharing, respect for human rights and dignity was carried out to counter sensationalist politics and to allay fears of separatism. This eventually built the public support to the point that new constitutional amendments were proposed. As part of this process, four major proposals were made

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<sup>95</sup> Edrisinha et al., *Power-Sharing in Sri Lanka: Constitutional and Political Documents, 1926–2008*, 480–648.

<sup>96</sup> The Rajapaksa administration is not the only GoSL that attempted to defeat the LTTE by means of military offensive. but it was the only one that succeeded. The military action of successive governments is discussed in Chapter IV.

public during the Kumaratunga government: for Constitutional Reforms in 1995, for the devolution of power in January 1996, for a new constitution in October 1995 and for the passing of the Constitutional Bill of August 2000.<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately, the government failed to reach consensus on any of them, which inevitably led to the failure of the entire process and left the government with the only option of continuing the warfare with no hope of building consensus among the political leaders on state reforms.<sup>98</sup>

In such a context, it is evident that the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA), which came under the next government (the UNP), had its actual ideological beginnings in 1994 with the election of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (SLFP) to the Executive Presidency with her pledge to end the ethnic conflict. As a result of the CFA, peace talks were initiated in 1994, but failed in 1995 when the LTTE sank a naval craft resulting in what the LTTE refers to as the “Third Eelam War.” From 1995 to 2001, the war raged across Sri Lanka with suicide bombings in the South and heavy fighting in the North and East. However, the tradition of constitutional reform in relation to the devolution of power was kept alive throughout this period by the introduction of “Devolution Packages” in the form of draft constitutions in 1996, 1997, and 2000. During this time the government published proposals describing how the devolution of power of the central government would be accomplished and how it would result in a political solution for the war.<sup>99</sup>

In 2001, general elections were held and the UNP, managing a coalition of other minority parties which formed the United National Front (UNF), came back into power with Ranil Wickremasinghe (UNF) being sworn in as prime minister. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge continued to remain as president. Hence, Sri Lanka’s government consisted of an executive president headed by one party, the SLFP and the legislature controlled by another, the UNF.

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<sup>97</sup> Edrisinha et al., *Power-sharing in Sri Lanka: constitutional and political documents, 1926-2008*, 480-648

<sup>98</sup> Edrisinha et al., *Power-sharing in Sri Lanka: constitutional and political documents, 1926-2008*, 480-648

<sup>99</sup> A Tamil biased critique on the proposed packages of President Kumaranathunge can be read at <http://tamilnation.co/conflictresolution/tamileelam/cbkproposals/index.htm>.

Ranil Wickremasinghe's coalition government, following the general election of 5 December 2001, gave the following assurance in their election manifesto:

We will end the war and build national unity. We will bring about a political solution acceptable to all those who are party to the crisis, within the framework of an undivided Sri Lanka.... Once we come to power, we will initiate a dialogue with all political parties, the clergy, and civil society organizations, in order to arrive at a broad based political solution, acceptable to all. We will also involve the LTTE in the process.<sup>100</sup>

TheGoSL, with Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge of the SLFP as the executive president and Ranil Wickramasinghe of the United National Front alliance as the prime minister, entered into a formal "peace process" with the LTTE with the signing of the CFA on 23 February 2002.<sup>101</sup> However, it is important to note that Prime Minister Wickremasinghe did not begin the peace process; the People's Alliance representatives had already been discussing with a neutral party in Norway to facilitate the issue of re-engaging the LTTE in negotiations,<sup>102</sup> while the security forces of the GoSL "suffered a humiliating military debacle with unprecedented heavy casualties," as it was triumphantly announced on the LTTE website in April 2001 following a failed offensive initiated by the Sri Lankan army.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the devastating attack carried out by the LTTE on the Bandaranaike International Airport in July 2001 hastened the urgency to focus on a negotiated settlement. The ensuing Norway-facilitated negotiations led to an understanding with the government that it would take steps to remove restrictions on certain items that were, at the time, prohibited from being taken to LTTE-dominated areas in Wanni (this prohibition was described by the LTTE as "an economic blockade of the Tamil areas.")<sup>104</sup> Hence, it is evident that the negotiations between the LTTE and the GoSL commenced informally even prior to the election in December 2001 and they

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100 "Election Manifesto 2001," United National Front.

101 SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, ed. B. Raman, Sathiya Moorthy, and Kalpana Chittaranjan (New Delhi: Samskriti in association with Observer Research Foundation, 2006).

102 Bernard Goonathilleke, "An Insider's view on the process leading to the CFA," ed. S I. Keethaponchalan and Ravi Jayewardene, *Sri Lanka: Perspectives on the Ceasefire Agreement of 2002* (Colombo: South Asia Peace Institute, 2009), 11.

103 Goonathilleke, "An Insider's view on the process leading to the CFA."

104 Goonathilleke, "An Insider's view on the process leading to the CFA."

involved the People's Alliance (PA) headed by President Kumaratunge with the help of her foreign minister, a Tamil moderate politician, Lakshman Kadiragamar.<sup>105</sup>

It should be noted that it was the LTTE that first announced a ceasefire on 19 December 2001. In a formal statement, the organization announced a month long unilateral cessation of hostilities as a gesture of goodwill during the holiday season, in order to facilitate and promote initiatives towards a peace process. The GoSL responded favorably to the announcement and made a similar offer to commence a ceasefire on 24 December for one month. Norway brokered a formal ceasefire agreement that was signed on 23 February 2002. Starting from September 2002, there were six rounds of talks between the GOSL and the LTTE in Thailand, Norway, and Japan. Although the LTTE stated that it was committed to peace and that it would respect the CFA, it withdrew its representation from talks with the GOSL and from the Subcommittee on Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East in April 2003. The LTTE is said to have had dual motives for this. First, they felt trapped into committing to a negotiated settlement on critical political issues by the international community.<sup>106</sup> Second, they reasoned that their exclusion from the Washington Conference on Donors held on the 15 April 2003 was an insult.<sup>107</sup> The LTTE was not allowed into this conference because the US had the LTTE still listed as a foreign terrorist organization during Sri Lanka's peace process and the donor conference in Washington.

The LTTE put forward the Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) proposals after it rejected three GOSL proposals for interim arrangements for the North and East.<sup>108</sup> The LTTE adopted a stubborn, hard-bargaining strategy by utilizing their ISGA proposals as a "minimum fallback achievement," which had to be instituted and made functional before any talks on a political solution commenced.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Senanayake, *Sri Lanka: The War Fuelled by Peace*, 73.

<sup>106</sup> SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xiii – xiv.

<sup>107</sup> SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xiii – xiv.

<sup>108</sup> SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xiii – xiv.

<sup>109</sup> SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xiii – xiv.

Vellupillai Prabhakaran's LTTE "Hero's Day" speech on 27 November 2004 provided a good indication about where the CFA was going. He ended it by saying:

We cannot continue to be entrapped in a political vacuum without an interim solution or a permanent settlement, without a stable peace and without peace of mind. The Sinhala nation neither assimilates nor [sic] integrates our people to live in co-existence nor does it allow our people to secede and lead a separate existence. We cannot continue to live in the darkness of political uncertainty, without freedom, without emancipation, without any prospects for the future. There are borderlines to patience and expectations. We have now reached the borderline...If the Government of Sri Lanka rejects our urgent appeal and adopts delaying tactics, perpetuating the suffering of our people, we have no alternative other than to advance the freedom struggle of our nation.<sup>110</sup>

This, along with the government's resolution that it would not accept threats and conditions for talks with the LTTE, indicated that both parties were once again drifting towards hostile stances.<sup>111</sup> It must be emphasized that the CFA was true to its literal implication: it was an agreement to "cease" the "fire [hostilities]" between two sides. It provided a situation in which there was "no war, no peace."<sup>112</sup> This did not suit the LTTE politically because, as in the case of the South, the ordinary people in the North and the East felt that they were not receiving their "material share" of peace and they were becoming restless.<sup>113</sup> In regards to this, Professor S.D Muni emphasized that the LTTE suffered due to this dynamic: "The LTTE's credibility is getting eroded and they have no adequate answers to the questions of rehabilitation and resettlement of the Tamil people."<sup>114</sup>

Politics directly, or indirectly, influences everything, including the peace process. Although the Sri Lankan people, including sections of the Sri Lankan business community and international players, drove the UNF government towards peace

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110 LTTE leader's annual "Hero's day" speech on the November 27, 2004, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/papers/heroday2004.htm>.

111 SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xiii - xiv

112 SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xxiv.

113 SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xxiv.

114 SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xxiv.

negotiations, one of the key drivers during the peace process was the political ambition of UNF Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe. His primary objective while continuing the peace process was to marginalize his SLFP rival (incumbent President Chandrika Banadaranike Kumaratunge), secure Sinhala and Tamil votes through the CFA period of four years, and become president at the next presidential election.<sup>115</sup> To achieve this purpose, the UNF government had two main strategies. The first involved engaging, accommodating, and conceding to the LTTE. The second strategy was to utilize the international communities' support to prevent a destabilization of the UNF government due to pressure from either the PA or the LTTE.<sup>116</sup>

There were a number of instances where the UNF government went astray. One such incident was the recognition of the LTTE as the “sole representative of the Tamil people” and the recognition of the right to internal self-determination. These were done purely to keep the LTTE happy. Meanwhile, the USA, UK, EU, Japan, and India gave considerable support to the UNF government, including the 2003 promise of 4.5 billion U.S. dollars in economic assistance with one-third of it reserved for the Northern and Eastern provinces conditional to the continuation of the peace process.<sup>117</sup>

However, the relationship between the UNF government and the SLFP presidency continued to wane. In a conflict situation, it is essential that all parties are continuously consulted and kept engaged, especially in a Sri Lankan political system, which requires the support of almost all “Sinhala” political parties to formulate a political solution for the ethnic conflict due to socio-demographic electoral dynamics and constitutional constraints.<sup>118</sup> This did not occur within the GoSL during the CFA period on a number of occasions. For example, it is common knowledge in Sri Lanka that the provisions of the CFA between the GoSL and the LTTE were not revealed to President Kumaratunge until

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<sup>115</sup> SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xv.

<sup>116</sup> SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xv.

<sup>117</sup> SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xvi.

<sup>118</sup> SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without process*, xix.

twenty-four hours before it was signed.<sup>119</sup> The reason for this was that the UNF government overplayed its strategy to marginalize the PA which resulted in President Kumaratunge taking over the portfolios of Defense, Interior, and Mass Communications based on a constitutional mandate given to the president to safeguard Sri Lanka's security and sovereignty.<sup>120</sup>

Ultimately, the UNF government was dissolved and elections were held in April of 2004. The Sinhala nationalistic movements and the Marxist JVP decided to back the President and her SLFP in the parliamentary election against the UNP, who the majority of the Sinhalese population saw as weak and giving in to the LTTE during their short-term in government. Both the CFA and the Interim Self-Governing authority for the LTTE was seen as betrayal of the Sinhalese people and the Sinhalese felt it showed the UNP leadership giving in to the demands of the LTTE. The 2004 elections proved that this was the growing feeling among the majority. After just four years in power, the UNP lost the parliament to the United People's Freedom Alliance (a coalition of the President's SLFP, Communist Left wing parties, Marxist JVP, and the Buddhist monks of the "Jathika Hela Urumaya "[JHU]).

The new parliament, with the UPFA government established and the president back in full power of the country, appointed Lakshman Kadiragamr (who was later assassinated by the LTTE) as the foreign minister and Mahinda Rajapaksa as the prime minister. Table 1 shows the composition of the parliament after the elections of 2004.<sup>121</sup>

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119 This is an example of the effects on the political situation in Sri Lanka with the Executive President and the government in Parliament being from two different and opposing parties. The situation is troublesome because, while the president appoints the ministers, she or he has to select from the opposition who is in power in the legislator.

120 SD Muni, overview to *Sri Lanka: Peace without Process*, xx.

121 Official election results of Sri Lanka can be found online at the Election Commission's website. Past election results are found at <http://www.slelections.gov.lk/pastElection4.html>.



Table 1. Composition of Parliament after the 2004 General Elections			
POLITICAL PARTY/ INDEPENDENT GROUP	DISTRICT BASIS SEATS	NATIONAL BASIS SEATS	TOTAL SEATS
UNITED PEOPLE'S FREEDOM ALLIANCE	92	13	105
UNITED NATIONAL PARTY	71	11	82
ILLANKAI TAMIL ARASU KACHCHI	20	2	22
JATHIKA HELA URUMAYA	7	2	9
SRI LANKA MUSLIM CONGRESS	4	1	5
UP-COUNTRY PEOPLE'S FRONT	1	0	1
EELAM PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY	1	0	1

The new government, under the leadership of President Kumaranathunga, continued to carry-out the provisions of CFA and the peace negotiations mainly due to pressure from the Norway-led international community and also because they did not want to start immediate military action. Meanwhile, the LTTE (even with the continued violations of the CFA) was showing willingness to continue the peace negotiations.<sup>122</sup> In 2005, the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka deliberated over the term durations of the president; a ruling that brought President Kumaranatunga's second term in office to an end just one year short of the allocated six.<sup>123</sup> The next presidential elections were scheduled for November 2005. After many doubts and criticism over his hardline Sinhalese roots, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa was selected by the UPFA to run in the election. The Prime Minister and, now presidential candidate, managed to strengthen and revive the volatile relationships between his party and the JVP in order to gain JVP's backing at the elections. UNP leader and former Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe

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<sup>122</sup> Jayadeva Uyangoda, "The Path Ahead," *Frontline* 22, no. 18 (September 11, 2005), assessed February 18, 2012, <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2218/stories/20050909004801700.htm>.

<sup>123</sup> "Profile: Chandrika Kumaratunga," *BBC News*, last modified September 26, 2005, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/3239821.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3239821.stm).

was the key opposition contestant. The election of 2005 was a close race between the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition. The Prime Minister Rajapaksa was aided by a late decision by the LTTE to force a boycott of the election in areas under their control. With the majority of people in the South supporting Rajapaksa, as the candidate who opposed the CFA and the division of the country, he was elected the new president of Sri Lanka.<sup>124</sup>

President Rajapaksa hailed from a southern Sinhalese political dynasty, which, in the post-independent Ceylon, had been active but subdued. His uncle, D.M. Rajapaksa, was elected to both the first and second State Councils, pre-independence, as a representative of their ancestral home Hambanthota. At the time of his death, D.M. Rajapaksa was still the representative for Hambanthota. D.M.'s brother, D.A. Rajapaksa, was invited by the local population to contest the seat made vacant by D.M.'s death. He is the father of the current President. D.A. Rajapaksa was also the first member of the Parliament to crossover to the opposition along with S.W.R.D. Banadaranayake, making him a founding member of the SLFP. This gave the Rajapaksa family a claim for the leadership and domination of the party politics, second only to the founders' children, both former President Chandrika Bandaranayake Kumaranathuga and her brother, former minister and speaker of the House of Parliament, Anura Bandaranayake. The Rajapaksa Dynasty took pride in associating itself with the grass root Sinhalese majority in the South. Unlike the Banadaranayakes, who considered themselves part of the Sinhalese elite of the island, the Rajapaksas were considered to be "for the people from the people." This was an evident trait of President Mahinda Rajapaksa's; from his very early years as a human rights lawyer to his initiatives as the Minister of Labor, such as the introduction of legislation meant to empower the working class, to his action to introduce housing projects for the slum-dwelling fishermen during his tenure as the Minister of Fisheries. This trait proved invaluable to him in the long run. As president, Rajapaksa

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<sup>124</sup> S. Narapalasingam, "In retrospect: 2005 Presidential Election, LTTE boycott and Heroes' Day address," last modified April 27, 2007, <http://tamilweek.com/news-features/archives/921>.

continued to state his belief in a political solution and continued to pursue the solution through the CFA under the leadership of his predecessor, President Kumaratunga.<sup>125</sup>

However ethnic violence broke out in Trincomalee in April 2006 with the explosion of a LTTE bomb in a crowded market place filled with people getting ready for the forthcoming Sinhala and Tamil New Year. Ethnic tensions were at a tipping point in Trincomalee as they had been building up in preceding months. In response to the incident, the Sinhalese community went on a rampage through the town, burning down Tamil business establishments and injuring and killing Tamil people in the streets. University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR) subsequently reported that; “The Sri Lanka Security forces did nothing to stop the mobs for several hours.”<sup>126</sup> There were justifiable concerns that these incidents would result in another “Black Friday.” However, the situation was normalized rapidly, although the tensions prevailed. Subsequent to an attack at the entrance to the Army Hospital on 25 April 2006 in an attempt to kill the Army Commander General Sarath Fonseka, the Sri Lankan Air Force responded with an air attack on a LTTE base in Sampur located in the Trincomalee District of the Eastern Province. Confrontations between the LTTE and GoSL continued, but it was the LTTE’s decision to not open sluice gates in Maavil Aru, located in the Trincomalee–Batticaloa border, that caused an escalation of violence by the GoSL. Closing of the sluice gates resulted in Sri Lanka being on the brink of a human rights catastrophe. The Maavil Aru provided water to the entire province and would have caused irreparable damage to lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands. For this reason, the GoSL was compelled to step up the offensive and they began the final stage of the Eelam War, which has later been referred to as the humanitarian effort on the part of GoSL by the President and the government. This resulted in the de facto end of the CFA.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> The president’s official web site carries a profile of the president which can be found at [http://www.president.gov.lk/mahinda\\_rajapaksa.php](http://www.president.gov.lk/mahinda_rajapaksa.php).

<sup>126</sup> “UTHR (J) Information Bulletin,” no. 28, February 2007, accessed February 18, 2012, <http://www.uthr.org/bulletins/bul28.htm>.

<sup>127</sup> While the GoSL and the LTTE did not officially withdraw from the CFA at the time of the Maavil Aru incident, it was clear that, with the military operations underway and the LTTE’s response to it, the CFA was no longer in affect other than on paper. The GoSL officially withdrew from the CFA in 2008, at which time military operations had been going on for 2 years.

The CFA might have been a success in the short term, when both parties actually adhered to it, but this was only in the first few days and eventually both parties violated the terms of the agreement. Although it is a fact that the CFA and the peace process gained the support of the South at the time of its signing and even during its initial few months, the three main actors in the process: the UNF government, the LTTE, and Norway, along with the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), failed to retain public support. Further, these groups lacked the ability to counter criticisms against the CFA, and the ability to resolve and rectify mistakes they made within the process. In the meantime, the campaign against the CFA gathered a lot of momentum among the Sri Lankan people (from ordinary people to educated professionals to the military). This was a sentiment helped by the constant violation of the CFA, to which neither the SLMM nor the facilitator (Norway) could take any action apart from reporting on the violations to the media. Emotional stimulus among the majority population of the country paved the way for the final phase of open war on 16 January 2008 following the unilateral withdrawal of the GoSL from the CFA.

In a concerted campaign of combat operations, the military was soon able to clear the Eastern Province of the LTTE with the aid of the a breakaway group of the LTTE named “Karuna fraction.” Its leader Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan known by his *nom de guerre* Colonel Karuna Amman was the top LTTE military leader in the East before his defection. The East was cleared in June 2007 and the military campaign was renewed in Vanni, Northern Sri Lanka. The Vanni operations gathered momentum with a series of victories by Sri Lankan ground forces assisted by superior air power. Meanwhile, politically-stirred ethnic sensitivities and a well cultivated “us versus them” dichotomy that was well marketed via state media laid a solid rationale for the Sri Lankan government to bypass criticisms on the increase cost of living, the violation of humanitarian law, and the death and displacement of thousands of civilians during the 2008 to 2009. Within this grand design to remove the terrorist group, there was no room

for any dialogue or peace negotiations with the group. Once begun, the Sri Lankan war would end in a grand finale steeped in state triumphalism over a non-state actor in 19 May 2009.<sup>128</sup>

President Rajapaksa's manifesto prior to the election in 2005, called "Mahinda Chinthana" (Mahinda Vision), did not specifically state that he would move away from the peace negotiations or the CFA, but it was critical of the CFA and stated that, when elected, he would:

Present a specific time frame and a clear agenda to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in order to recommence discussions. Our agenda which shall be open and transparent, shall include vital concerns such as renouncing separatism, demilitarization, entry in the democratic process, a discussion towards a final solution and the implementation of such solution.<sup>129</sup>

While clearly not stating the recommencement of hostilities, Rajapaksa wanted an "undivided country, a national consensus and an honorable peace."<sup>130</sup> This manifesto also addressed the military personnel and steps to uplift the status and welfare of the active members and veterans of the military. While the manifesto outlined moves towards the development of the country and other concerns, it was very clear that if Rajapaksa was elected to office, his primary concern was the ethnic conflict. For example, when hostilities started, this action would be the number one priority for the government. This was different from previous situations when there were parallel interests for the government in power. The government led by Rajapaksa utilized media and press to create and sustain support for the military operations. For the first time in Sri Lankan history, war correspondents and media units were allowed to be embedded with the units fighting in the front lines.

Additionally, the government initiated projects to uplift the military to a new social status that had not existed prior to that time. Housing projects for fallen and injured

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<sup>128</sup> Military operations will be discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

<sup>129</sup> "Minhinda Chinthana [Vision of Mahinda]," the official election manifesto by Mahinda Rajapaksa published prior to the 2005 Presidential Election accessed February 18, 2012, [www.president.gov.lk/pdfs/MahindaChinthanaEnglish.pdf](http://www.president.gov.lk/pdfs/MahindaChinthanaEnglish.pdf).

soldiers and special programs to funnel support from around the world (mainly from expats) were launched to motivate the fighting men. During this time, Rajapaksa also managed to strengthen his government's majority in the Parliament by means of drawing opposition members into the ruling coalition party. The UNP lost most of its senior members, including its deputy leader, who, among others, crossed-over to the government in support of the military action.<sup>131</sup> With the government's power consolidated in the parliament, the President was free to continue the military action.

It was also made clear from the beginning by the media and through other means that military actions were not aimed at the Tamil population. The government's efforts were referred to as a humanitarian operation that was intended to liberate the people, Tamil and others, from the oppression and terror of the LTTE. The war's slogan was that the military action "was not against Tamil people but against the LTTE."<sup>132</sup> The government carried this slogan all throughout the conflict and it is emphasized still. LTTE did not help its cause with continued suicide terrorist attacks which enabled the government to mold its image and demonize the LTTE's actions to the Sri Lankan and global population. Clearly, this initiative proved a success. Additionally, the LTTE gained brief control over its territories during the CFA and its actions during that time to control and establish a government were instrumental in eroding the LTTE's legitimacy among their own constituents. The introduction of taxation, LTTE police, and the oppression that the LTTE leadership projected onto its own population helped the cause of the government.<sup>133</sup>

The government's military actions gained popular support within the country. This was clearly demonstrated at the presidential elections of 2010. The UNP had lost the support of the people and was forced to consider a coalition. The opposition parties,

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130. Ibid.

131 "Karu UNP deputy leader," accessed February 18, 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/news/story/2008/12/081208\\_unp\\_karu.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sinhala/news/story/2008/12/081208_unp_karu.shtml).

132 Both the President and Defense Secretary, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, continually stated in all of their interviews and public addresses that the war was against the LTTE and not the Tamil population. The author was present at all interviews and public addresses by the Defense Secretary during this time.

133 Stephen L. Battle, "Lessons In Legitimacy: The LTTE End Game Of 2007–2009," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010).

understanding the popular political support that the military success had brought the President, decided to create a coalition. This coalition put forward the former Commander of the Army, who led the SLAF Army against the LTTE as the challenger to the incumbent President Mahinda Rajapaksa. General Sarath Fonseka (a battle hardened veteran who miraculously survived a suicide attempt on his life and returned to active duty) was President Rajapaksa's weapon of choice during the war. Prior to his 2006 appointment to the highest command in the Army, Fonseka was two weeks older than the compulsory retirement age but he was given a presidential extension of service. After the war ended, the General had a falling out with the President and his brother, the Defense Secretary, over the power and authority over the armed forces. The General was poised at gaining more authority and power over the Military than he was afforded by the Government.

Fearing a coup and understanding the popularity the military action had brought, the President and the Defense Secretary forced the General into the nominal, powerless post of Chief of Defense Staff, where he was forced to retire from service.<sup>134</sup> General Fonseka contested for the presidency as the victorious General who single handedly thwarted the LTTE, while President Rajapaksa contested as the victorious president who was the first and only president to unify the country and thwart the LTTE. Both campaigns were based on the military victory because Fonseka and Rajapaksa realized the importance of the victory and the historical and emotional affect it had on the people and the vote. The election clearly showed how much the end of the war meant to the people of Sri Lanka.

While internal political dynamics are key in understanding the rise and fall of the LTTE, they are only a part of the story. The external political, social, and economic changes outside of Sri Lanka have also affected the conflict.

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<sup>134</sup> The following articles provide further information on General Fonseka: <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cnotes6%5Cnote527.html>, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers37/paper3634.html>, and <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/01/26/idINIndia-45682420100126>.

### III. EXTERNAL INFLUENCE ON THE SRI LANKAN CONFLICT

*Cordially I invite those countries that have banned us, to understand the deep aspirations and friendly overtures of our people, to remove their ban on us and to recognise our just struggle... Notwithstanding the dividing sea, Tamil Nadu, with its perfect understanding of our plight, has taken heart to rise on behalf of our people at this hour of need. This timely intervention has gratified the people of Tamil Eelam and our freedom movement and given us a sense of relief. I wish to express my love and gratitude at this juncture to the people and leaders of Tamil Nadu and the leaders of India for the voice of support and love they have extended. I would cordially request them to raise their voice firmly in favour of our struggle for a Tamil Eelam state, and to take appropriate and positive measures to remove the ban which remains an impediment to an amicable relationship between India and our movement.*

**—V. Prabhakaran, LTTE leader in his annual Heroes' Day statement,  
27 November 2008**

This chapter will to retrace the external factors that contributed directly or indirectly to the conflict in Sri Lanka. The above quote from the LTTE leader is testament to the importance of the external factors. These factors have at times fueled and at times suffocated the LTTE's cause. These same factors have also had a similar impact on the success and the failures of the GoSL. While we examine these external influences separately from the internal politics for the sake of simplicity, in reality these factors are not mutually exclusive. One must also take in to consideration that this research does not have the ability to examine all global and regional factors, which may have affected the conflict due to the many varied implications of those factors. Therefore, this study considers the most relevant external factors in order to focus on the essence of the conflict.

For this thesis, although we will focus on the period 1948 to 2009 the events prior to that time frame are also significant. For example, the concept of a separate state for Tamil people or a "Dravida desam"<sup>135</sup> dated back to colonial times, when Reverend

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<sup>135</sup> "Dravidian" is a term used to refer to the diverse groups of people who speak languages belonging to the Dravidian language family. Populations of speakers of around 220 million are found mostly in Southern India. Other Dravidian people are found in parts of central India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. The most populous Dravidian people are the Telugus, Tamils, Kannadigas, and the Malayalis. Smaller Dravidian communities with 1–5 million speakers are the Tuluvas, Gonds, and Brahui.



Robert Cadwell (1819-1891), a missionary, contended that there was a “fundamental difference between north and south Indians, between Aryans or Brahman and Dravidian or Tamil language and culture.”<sup>136</sup> While this effectively made him the father of south Indian nationalism, it also fueled a demand for “India [to] be divided into three separate states – Aryan, Muslim and Dravidian.”<sup>137</sup> Tamil Nadu and northern Sri Lanka are separated only by a 20-kilometer stretch of shallow sea. As stated by David Little, “Tamil Nationalism in Jaffna cannot be seen separate from Tamil nationalism in south India by which it has been influenced and on which it has, to some extent, fed.”<sup>138</sup>

The Sinhalese in Sri Lanka had a strong tendency to identify with their Aryan roots of North Indian heritage, while the Tamils connected naturally with their brethren in the southern tip of India. However, early migration patterns of both people could not have been structured to the extent that only Sinhalese descended from Aryans and only Tamils descended from southern Indians. Even in the political struggle to gain independence, the two ethnic groups have worked with each other and as one for the cause of an independent nation. Nationalism, then, was not an old ideal. The *divide-and-rule* policy of the British was the true beginning of the tension between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, and did more to instill the communal differences between the two ethnic groups than any other event in Sri Lankan history. “The British encouraged this separation of the different communities,” since it was to their advantage when controlling and maintaining the colonial government in Sri Lanka.

## A. INDIA

After gaining independence from the Britain, the most influential player in both the island’s politics and the communal conflict was India. Their covert and overt, direct and indirect involvement from 1953 to present was the most important external influence

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136 David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*, 38.

137 David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*, 39.

138 David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*, 40.

to affect the Sri Lankan conflict. To better understand India's involvement with Sri Lanka, it is important to understand the varying reasons for India to be interested in its southern-most neighbor.

India, after gaining its independence, was trying to consolidate its status as the regional power. In their eyes, China, Pakistan, and the U.S. were all in contention for supremacy in the Indian Ocean.<sup>139</sup> Sri Lanka's geographical positioning and natural harbors made it a strategically important location for any power that sought to dominate the Indian Ocean. Additionally, the Sri Lankan government associated with Western powers during the Cold War, while India aligned with the U.S.S.R. Sri Lanka also opened the Trincomalee naval harbor for U.S. naval ships, which India considered a threat to the regional security. From the perspective of many Indian leaders and their advisers, destabilization of Sri Lanka was critical for India to maintain regional supremacy.

Another reason that India was interested in Sri Lanka had to do with the close connection of the Tamils in Tamil Nadu and in northern Sri Lanka which made the conflict in Sri Lanka a politically sensitive issue for the central government of India. The south Indian state even provided external sanctuary in which Sri Lankan Tamils could conduct their military operations and training, aided by the Indian External Intelligence Agency's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).<sup>140</sup> The establishment of a separate state for Tamils in Sri Lanka, so close to Tamil Nadu, could have a spillover effect where the sentiments for a separate state in Tamil Nadu, the "Dravida Desam," could go mainstream again. In response, Prime Minister Nehru introduced the 16<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Indian Constitution, which made it "mandatory for those running for [elected] office to take an oath stating that [they] will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India. Since then, Tamil Nadu politicians holding office could not campaign for a separate Tamil state openly."<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of India's Intelligence Agencies*, (Colombo: South Asian Network on Conflict Research, 1993), 1 – 18.

<sup>140</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of India's Intelligence Agencies*, (Colombo: South Asian Network on Conflict Research, 1993), 1 – 18.

<sup>141</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, xi.

It was initially the state government in Tamil Nadu that supported the Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups to maintain training camps in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, when the prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi, persuaded M. G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, to close down these training camps, “Ramachandran indicated to her that he was unable to do so because the Tamils in south India wanted to help their fellow Tamils living across the Palk Straits.” Furthermore, it was a political issue in Tamil Nadu where closing down the camps would give, Ramachandran’s main opposition, “M. Karunanidhi... a political edge over him.”<sup>142</sup>

M. Karunanidhi was supporting militancy in Sri Lanka, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) in particular. Both the RAW and the Intelligence Bureau (IB)—the internal intelligence agency of India—had reported on the serious ramifications for India if a separate Tamil state was created. Because of her weak political presence in the southern states, Indira Gandhi could not dismiss Ramachandran nor could she enforce the President’s direct rule in Tamil Nadu. Thus, the only option open to the Indian Prime Minister was to force the Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayawardhna to open negotiations with Tamil political parties in Sri Lanka in hopes of finding a political settlement to the issue.<sup>143</sup> Unfortunately, the 1983 riots, the personal differences between Indira Gandhi and the Sri Lankan president, and the latter’s preference of a military solution all contributed to India taking unilateral, covert action in Sri Lanka. The “Sri Lankan Operation” was to be two-fold, a covert operation undertaken by the Third Agency and an overt political operation undertaken by the Ministry of External Affairs and the prime minister’s office. The operation sought to take control of the Tamil militancy and to destabilize Sri Lanka.<sup>144</sup> The first overt involvement of India in the conflict would come after the 1983 Black July riots.<sup>145</sup>

The town of Jaffna was the administrative capital of the Northern province and also the clandestine seat of LTTE power. "Operation Liberation" was implemented by

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<sup>142</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, 2–3

<sup>143</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, 3.

<sup>144</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, 5.

<sup>145</sup> This is discussed in more detail in Chapter II.

the Sri Lankan military to recapture the area of Vadamarachchi and in May of 1987, the Sri Lankan military surrounded the Jaffna fort, which was also LTTE stronghold. However, their impending success was derailed when on 26 May 1987, the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, intervened to inform Colombo that India would not allow the capture of Jaffna.

India further intervened by sending a flotilla of Indian boats under Red Cross flags “[with] relief supplies to Jaffna,” but the flotilla was blockaded and turned back by the Sri Lankan Navy.<sup>146</sup> India launched “Operation Poolmalai” which violated Sri Lankan air space in order to drop relief supplies from the air. This prompted Sri Lanka to give in and allow more relief supplies to be sent via sea, saving the LTTE from certain defeat.<sup>147</sup>

In July of the same year, LTTE leader Prabhakaran was flown into New Delhi where he met Prime Minister Gandhi and was briefed on the India–Sri Lanka negotiations and the subsequent agreement between the Indian PM and the Sri Lankan president. The Indo-Lanka accord allowed Indian military to take over the peacekeeping mission in the North and East of Sri Lanka. The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), at its height, numbered more than 100,000 in the region. Prabhakaran agreed and signed the Indo-Lanka accord to mixed reactions from the Sri Lankan and Indian populace. Sri Lankan politicians, including the prime minister and his cabinet members, boycotted the signing, while in India, Prime Minister Gandhi was assaulted while inspecting the guard of honor presented to him after the signing of the accord.<sup>148</sup>

The major ramifications of the accord included the unification of North and East as one administrative unit, the withdrawal and confinement of Sri Lankan military into their barracks, the cessation of hostilities, and the surrender of arms by all militant groups.<sup>149</sup> In truth, out of the main five militant Tamil groups in the region, only four,

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<sup>146</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, xiii.

<sup>147</sup> Bharat Rakshak, “Indian Air Force in Sri Lanka: Operation Poomalai - The Jaffna Food drop,” accessed 27 March 2012, <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/IAF/History/1987IPKF/Chapter1.html>.

<sup>148</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, xiv.

<sup>149</sup> “Indo-Lanka Accord, July 1987,” Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process, accessed 27 March 2012, <http://www.peaceinsrilanka.org/negotiations/ila>.

under the influence of RAW, strictly adhered to the Indo-Lanka accord. The LTTE, the most powerful and most committed to the separatist ideology, only symbolically handed over some of their arms and did not disarm fully. Thus, while the Indo-Lanka accord established the framework for a solution to the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka, it only served to shift the political power of the Tamil militancy from scattered, moderate groups to the extremist LTTE. This transition elevated the LTTE to their self-assumed mantle as the "sole representative of the Tamil people." LTTE recommenced their genocidal attacks against the Sinhalese and Muslims in an attempt to remove them from the North and East. They also attacked SL military positions that, in turn, forced the IPKF to retaliate. This prompted "Operation Pawan,"<sup>150</sup> which forced the LTTE to disarm and cease hostilities. Indian military action was under criticism by both Sri Lankan and Tamil Nadu politicians. Sri Lanka saw it as Indian intervention in internal matters, while Tamil Nadu saw it as the Indian military killing and acting against their Tamil brethren to the South.

The LTTE continued to receive support from Tamil Nadu and, in 1989, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party leader, Karunanidhi, "a strong supporter of the Sri Lankan Tamil Militancy and a separate Dravida nation-state in Tamil Nadu came to power in Tamil Nadu India."<sup>151</sup> DMK and its predecessor, the Justice Party, had voiced support for a separate Dravidian state during Indian independence and thereafter.

In Sri Lanka, the JVP began to intensify their political and military status in the South.<sup>152</sup> President Jayewardene successfully completed his second term in 1989 and Prime Minister Premadasa took over as the second executive president of Sri Lanka. President Premadasa had been against the Indo-Lanka accord from its inception and so, with the hostile political scene due to Indian military presence, he urged IPKF to halt military action against LTTE positions. In April 1989, the President invited the LTTE into unconditional negotiations. The LTTE accepted and subsequently they and the Sri Lankan government started negotiations in Colombo the same year. Shortly thereafter,

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<sup>150</sup> Bharat Rakshak, "Operation Pawan - The Battle for Jaffna," accessed 27 March 2012, <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/LAND-FORCES/History/1987-90/296-Operation-Pawan.html>.

<sup>151</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, xv

<sup>152</sup> David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*, 37 – 47.

President Premadasa requested that the IPKF leave Sri Lanka by July 29. In a surprising reversal of what happened during Operation Liberation, it was now the Sri Lankan politicians who saved the LTTE from military annihilation. In a move intended to force India to withdraw their military presence, President Premadasa's government also covertly supported the LTTE by sending them military supplies.<sup>153</sup>

The last of the IPKF left Sri Lanka in 1990 after almost 1,500 people were killed and close to 3,000 were injured in the failed peacekeeping mission in Sri Lanka.<sup>154</sup> In a last ditch attempt, the RAW and Indian Army formed the Tamil National Army (TNA) to replace the IPKF in order to make sure that the area would be under Indian, rather than LTTE, control. But the LTTE, with the support of the Sri Lankan government, destroyed this military outfit immediately after the IPKF left Sri Lanka. The clandestine support of the Sri Lankan government was key in the efforts of the LTTE removing the TNA. With the departure of IPKF and the destruction of the TNA, LTTE, for the first time, managed to become the dominant force in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka and they took over positions vacated by the Indian military.<sup>155</sup>

While overtly continuing with the negotiations, the LTTE assumed control in Trincomalee, the capital town in the Eastern province. In one of their most violent actions to-date, the LTTE's Eastern wing attacked nine police stations. The government had ordered the policemen to surrender, but the LTTE killed over 600 policemen despite their compliance. This left Colombo no other choice but to resume military operations.<sup>156</sup>

The year 1991 was crucial in the path towards the demise of the LTTE. In January, the new Indian PM, Chandra Shekar, dismissed Karunanidhi from his position as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu due to his ties with the LTTE. The LTTE "Black Tigers"—the elite suicide wing of the LTTE—began its operations with a suicide car bomb that assassinated Sri Lankan Defense Minister Ranjan Wijerathne. In May of the

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<sup>153</sup> Covert operations to support the LTTE during this time are explained in the next chapter, which discusses the military of Sri Lanka.

<sup>154</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, xvi.

<sup>155</sup> Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, xvi.

<sup>156</sup> "Recalling the saddest day in Lankan Police history," Sri Lankan News & Discussions, accessed on 27 March 2012, <http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2011/6/67843.html>.

same year, a female suicide bomber and a member of the Black Tigers assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi while he was on the campaign trail for reelection.<sup>157</sup>

Those responsible, the LTTE supreme leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE head of intelligence, Pottu Amman, and the LTTE strategist, Sivarasan, had all been trained by Indian intelligence agencies in covert operations authorized by Rajiv Gandhi's mother, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The LTTE's killing of Rajiv Gandhi, twice blessed as the Prime Minister and as a member of the Gandhi dynasty, were instrumental in India's reversal of attitude towards the LTTE. In 1992, the Indian government decried the LTTE as a terrorist organization and "from 1991 onwards, India was forced to pursue a "hands – off" policy towards the civil war in Sri Lanka."<sup>158</sup>

It was in the context of a more cooperative regional policy under the Gujral Doctrine that the Indian government accepted the involvement of external actors in Sri Lankan affairs. Starting in 2000, Norway acted as a mediator between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, which led to the signing of another ceasefire agreement in 2002. The ceasefire established the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), which was a group composed of "Nordic" states charged with monitoring the ceasefire. Despite its non-involvement in these negotiations, India kept a watchful eye on the developments in Sri Lanka and was kept continuously informed by Norway about the latest developments in the peace process.<sup>159</sup>

During these years of Norwegian mediation and the Cease Fire Agreement, the goal of "lasting peace" was reaffirmed by India's quiet support for the peace process. From 2003 to 2009, India repeatedly expressed the goal of a "negotiated political settlement" which would encompass forms of power devolution in order to meet "the

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157 BBC, "On this day: May 21," accessed 27 March 2012, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/21/newsid\\_2504000/2504739.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/21/newsid_2504000/2504739.stm).

158 Sandra Destrad, "India and the Civil War in Sri Lanka: On the Failures of Regional Conflict Management in South Asia," GIGA Working Paper, accessed 27 March 2012, [http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp154\\_destradi.pdf](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp154_destradi.pdf).

159 Kristine Höglund and Isak Svensson. "Mediating Between Tigers and Lions: Norwegian Peace Diplomacy in Sri Lanka's Civil War," *Contemporary South Asia* 17, no. 2 (2009): 175–191.

aspirations of all communities.”<sup>160</sup> More specifically, India had a clear preference for the “unity, sovereignty and integrity” of Sri Lanka.<sup>161</sup> Their desire for “the unity of Sri Lanka in a federal system,”<sup>162</sup> related back to New Delhi’s fear of secessionist spillover effects on single Indian states, most notably, Tamil Nadu.

India’s resolve to remove itself from the conflict changed slightly in the period of 2007–2009 as there was a move to contain the political pressure on the central government by the LTTE-sympathetic state government of Tamil Nadu. In 2007, India took an indirect, but highly significant role in the military conflict. This new approach was manifested in their moves against the Sri Lankan government and in the provision of military hardware, mainly in the form of “defensive” equipment.<sup>163</sup>

In the years 2007–2009, the Indian and Sri Lankan Navies carried out coordinated operations that led to the destruction of at least ten LTTE “floating warehouses,” which considerably weakened the Sea Tigers.<sup>164</sup> The Indian Navy took over reconnaissance missions and the Sri Lankan Navy carried out the strikes.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, India provided the Sri Lankan government with life-saving equipment such as flak jackets, an offshore patrol vessel in 2007,<sup>166</sup> and they “quietly gifted” five helicopters to the Sri Lankan Air Force in 2006.<sup>167</sup> The only publicly acknowledged provision of support consisted of two

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160 MEA, visit of H.E. Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka from November 3rd to 7th 2004.

161 MEA statements made throughout the years 2003–2009.

162 A statement made by MEA, India, External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh in a joint press conference with Lakshman Kadirgamar, Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka on May 31, 2004. Moreover, India offered to share its “constitutional experience” with Sri Lanka. See MEA, India, on the visit to India of President of the Government of Spain and Foreign Minister of Argentina, visit of Foreign Secretary to Sri Lanka and response to questions on Indian fishermen in Pakistan and sale of F-16s by US to Pakistan, July 3, 2006.

163 Indian support for the Humanitarian Operation in 2006 was explained in detail by commanders of the operation on a seminar organized by the Sri Lanka army. The “Seminar on Defeating Terrorism Sri Lankan Experience” was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from May 31, 2011 to June 2, 2011.

164 Nitin A. Gokhale, *Sri Lanka: From War to Peace* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2009).

165 Gokhale, *Sri Lanka: From War to Peace*.

166 Information from the SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, <http://armstrade.sipri.org/> (April 28, 2009).

167 Gokhale, *Sri Lanka: From War to Peace*.



air surveillance radars needed to anticipate LTTE air attacks. But, most importantly, in 2008, India extended their training facilities to the Sri Lankan armed forces.<sup>168</sup>

Moreover, the Rajapaksa administration initiated a separate dialogue between Sri Lanka and India during the initial stages of the Humanitarian Operation (Fourth Eelam War) that bypassed the normal diplomatic channel with India. Rajapaksa selected a team that would be led by the Presidential Secretary, Lalith Weerathunga, the Defense Secretary, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, and the senior adviser to the president, Basil Rajapaksa, to regularly meet and visit Indian leaders including the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, the Congress Party General Secretary, Sonia Gandhi, and the External Affairs Minister. The objective of these meetings, according to the government, was to keep India informed of Sri Lanka's military campaign in an effort to prevent a repeat of the 1987 intervention of India. According to Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, President Rajapaksa "understood that while other countries could mount pressure on us through diplomatic channels or economic means, only India could influence the military campaign"<sup>169</sup> This, mostly taciturn, support by India for Sri Lanka's military campaign fit New Delhi's desire for stability and peace in the region.

After the end of the war, India also diplomatically supported Sri Lanka in international forums. On 28 May 2009, a special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was held to investigate the reported war crimes and atrocities committed by both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan armed forces. Two motions were discussed: one requesting an international investigation, and the other, presented by the Sri Lankan government, urging the international community to support Sri Lanka's reconstruction efforts. India, alongside China, Russia, Pakistan, and several Arab and African countries voted for it. While this voting behavior goes against India's traditional

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<sup>168</sup> Exact figures are difficult to find. According to Neil DeVotta (2010: 52), approximately 800 Sri Lankan officers are trained in India every year. According to the authors' own experience, currently all of Naval Officers in the Executive (x) branch follow their sub-technical course in India, which, per batch, would be a minimum of 20 officers.

<sup>169</sup> Gotabhaya Rajapaksa in his keynote address at the "Seminar On Defeating Terrorism: Sri Lankan Experience," which was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on the May 31, 2011.

preference for non-involvement in other countries' internal affairs, it emphasizes India's concern about the fate of the Sri Lankan Tamil civilians.

## **B. TAMIL DIASPORA AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

The Tamil Diaspora actively supported and kept the separatist ideology alive in many Western countries. The Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) specified that the Tamil Diaspora “provided [the separatists] with much needed propaganda, financial and logistic support for the LTTE and its leadership to survive as one of the most ruthless terrorist organizations in the world for more than three decades. With the elimination of the LTTE leadership in May 2009, the military might of LTTE too was vanquished. However, the Diaspora factor and the LTTE international network still largely remain intact posing a potential threat not only to Sri Lanka and the region but also to the peace and stability of the world at large.”<sup>170</sup>

An insurgency needs “people, money and guns” for its survival and growth, and, in the case of the LTTE, the Tamil Diaspora was providing all three of these things. Over 1 million Sri Lankan Tamils are located outside of Sri Lanka, of which more than half are settled in Canada and the UK. While the majority of the international Tamil community is sympathetic to the LTTE cause, only about 10% are actively involved in the fundraising efforts.<sup>171</sup>

The Tamil Diaspora is made up mostly of the educated Tamil population that managed to flee the country during the 1983 Black July communal riots. Most managed to find “political asylum in Western and European countries.”<sup>172</sup> The LTTE leadership “made every effort to gain control over the Tamil Diaspora in its efforts to establish the position that the LTTE was the sole representative of Tamils.” Most of the Tamil Diaspora members were reluctant to return to Sri Lanka due to the socio-economic luxuries they enjoyed internationally. In most countries, the Tamil Diaspora created a

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<sup>170</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Suresh Sallay (Foreign Intelligence Coordinator – Ministry of Defense, Sri Lanka) at the “Defeating Terrorism - Sri Lankan Experience Symposium,” May 31, 2011.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

labour force and, more importantly, a sizeable vote bank for local politicians. This situation was cleverly exploited by the LTTE and pro-LTTE elements, as local votes were exchanged for political support of the LTTE. The international Tamil population fled the country during the communal riots and their perceptions of the country were skewed in terms of their own experiences. Most of them believed that the situation in the country for Tamils had only gotten worse since 1983 at the hands of the Sinhalese-led government and military. The only connections that they had to the situation in Sri Lanka were the LTTE propaganda movements, which described the terrorist activities as justified. A wealth of funds was created, which the LTTE's international network managed to tap into very successfully. Interestingly, in identifying the contemporary nature of the Diaspora, scholars have pointed out that these communities, in general, do not necessarily yearn to return home. Instead, they articulate their primary connections through a symbolic homeland. This was especially apparent with the Tamil Diaspora.<sup>173</sup>

While the Tamil Diaspora supported the LTTE with most of their financial, propaganda, and logistical support, the Tamil Diaspora's most crucial contribution was in getting Western political influence involved with the conflict. To this end, by creating lobby groups and voting banks in Western countries and sometimes having members from their own community in the legislature of countries such as the UK and Canada, the Diaspora managed to pressure the political powers of these countries to influence the proceedings of the conflict.<sup>174</sup>

Table 2 shows the distribution of the Tamil Diaspora as reported by the Sri Lanka Military Intelligence.

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> "The sri lankan tamil diaspora after the LTTE," International Crisis Group, assessed 29MAY2012, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/186%20The%20Sri%20Lankan%20Tamil%20Diaspora%20after%20the%20LTTE.ashx>.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Tamil Diaspora</b>
Canada	380,000
UK	300,000
India	150,000
France	100,000
Germany	60,000
Switzerland	42,000
Australia	40,000
USA	35,000
Italy	23,000
Malaysia	20,000
Netherlands	15,000
Norway	12,000
Denmark	7,000
New Zealand	3,000
Sweden	2,500
Belgium	800
Finland	700

Table 2. Distribution of the Tamil Diaspora

The support the LTTE managed to get from the Tamil Diaspora was so substantial that it lessened the LTTE's dependence on local support and, as a result, the LTTE lost some legitimacy for their cause with the local population.<sup>175</sup> This study shows the extent of the support the LTTE was receiving from their international network and primarily from the Tamil Diaspora.

As for the LTTE's finances, they maintained an international financial network consisting of money exchange offices and couriers across Europe to ensure that money

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<sup>175</sup> Battle, "Lessons In Legitimacy: The LTTE End Game of 2007–2009."

collected was channeled to meet the LTTE's war budget without being detected by authorities. Saana Chandran, also known as Saana Group, is responsible for running this financial network under the direct supervision of Veerakulasingham Manivannan, also known as Castro. The income of LTTE during the period between 1993 and 2002 is estimated at US\$50–75 million annually. From 2002 to 2007, the annual income exceeded US\$200 million.<sup>176</sup>

The LTTE generated funds mainly from its front organizations as well as through legal and illegal business ventures such as international shipping lines, real estate, supermarkets, filling stations, drug smuggling, and human trafficking. The money collected was transferred mostly through people coming into Sri Lanka and, in some cases, through banking systems (i.e., Western Union). In the last few years, more than ten LTTE suspects have been arrested in Europe and Southeast Asia in connection with money laundering offenses committed during this period in Sri Lanka. It has also been observed that since May 2009, the LTTE fundraising ability has decreased by 80%. Despite the 80% reduction, the LTTE front organizations still manage to meet their functional expenses and organize various public events to mobilize the support of the Diaspora and international communities for its cause. It would be of interest to identify sources of funding of these front organizations and their motives as these funds are being used not only to promote LTTE ideology and separatism, but also to strengthen terrorist networks across the globe in the pretext of helping affected Tamils in Sri Lanka.<sup>177</sup>

The attacks of 9/11 changed the global perception of the LTTE. More than 32 states decried the LTTE as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) after 9/11. This was the direct result of an effective anti-terrorism campaign led by the United States. With regard to the conflict in Sri Lanka, the events of 9/11 hindered the operations of the

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<sup>176</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Suresh Sallay (Foreign Intelligence Coordinator – Ministry of Defense, Sri Lanka) at the “Defeating Terrorism - Sri Lankan Experience Symposium,” May 31, 2011. Also see “Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis,” Ministry of Defence, presented to the Foreign Diplomatic missions in Sri Lanka.

<sup>177</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Suresh Sallay (Foreign Intelligence Coordinator – Ministry of Defense, Sri Lanka) at the “Defeating Terrorism—Sri Lankan Experience Symposium,” May 31, 2011.

LTTE in the international terrain. However, to date, the Diaspora has not abandoned their strong nationalist feelings and they continue to support the LTTE cause even in the absence of an LTTE.

The September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers and Pentagon changed the entire approach of the U.S. foreign and domestic policy toward terrorist organizations. The degree of exclusion did not match its peak, which occurred from 2006 to 2007 after a number of LTTE attacks on innocent civilians including Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, a liberal minded Tamil. Still, the majority of governments in the Western states were no longer interested in aiding any non-state organization engaged in terrorism-related activities.

While only two countries had declared LTTE a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) prior to 9/11 (India in 1992 and the United States of America in 1997), the list eventually expanded to include:

- The UK (February 2001),
- UNSC (2005),
- Canada (April 2006), and
- The European Union (May 2006).

Rigid state actions were imposed, causing fear among the Tamil Diaspora which reduced the funds sent to LTTE. In October 2001, Canadian police arrested 40 Tamil gang members, reputed to fundraise for the LTTE, in a series of raids in Toronto.<sup>178</sup> Following these arrests, Thai authorities arrested and imprisoned three Tamil LTTE operatives attempting to buy weapons in Thailand. In 2006, a combined operation between the FBI and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) set out to track down several Tamils who were assumed to have had connections with the LTTE. They had tried to bribe state department officials and they had also attempted to purchase shoulder-fired surface to air missiles.<sup>179</sup> Additionally, in 2007, the Tamil Television Network was

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<sup>178</sup> Shanaka Jayasekara, "Terrorist Fundraising & Money Transfer Operations," International Conference on Countering Terrorism, 1–12.

<sup>179</sup> William K. Rashbaum, "13 Tied to Sri Lankan Separatists Are Charged by U.S. With Aiding Terrorists," *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/22/nyregion/22tigers.html>.

banned by Intelsat Ltd, a Washington-based company. The network was moved to Paris; however, under the provisions of FTO, French authorities banned it there as well.

Eventually, as the final stages of the Sri Lankan Civil War began, the LTTE lost its international financial backing as fundraising via the Diaspora became illegal under the international law.<sup>180</sup> The external influence and the changes in the regional and global perspective on Terrorism did contribute to the demise of the LTTE. But the most important aspect of the Sri Lankan governments COIN program was its military action.

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<sup>180</sup> “Illegal Tiger TV transmission shut down following Asian Tribune action,” *Asian Tribune*, last modified 25 April 2007, accessed <http://www.asiantribune.com/node/5459>.

## **IV. MILITARY TRANSFORMATION**

This chapter discusses the transformation of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) before and during the years of the conflict with the LTTE. It will trace a lineage that dates back to the independence of Sri Lanka from the British, to May 2009, when the President declared victory over the LTTE. The transformation to adopt to the LTTE spans a time frame from the beginning of the Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka during the 1970s to end of the Eelam War IV. The conflict with the Tamil militancy and the LTTE has been separated in to four phases due to the different cease-fires and negotiation efforts, which took place. This chapter will attempt to understand these changes of the military and the reasons for success of these adaptations during the Eelam war IV. The study by John Ngal outlined in the chapter I will guide this study to show the effects of the adaptations and the organizations (GoSL and SLAF) ability to accept adaptations based on lessons learned.

### **A. THE BEGINNING OF A SRI LANKAN MILITARY**

During the British colonial period, they set up the first rudimentary elements of a “Ceylon” military, the Ceylon Rifle Regiment purely for ceremonial duties, in 1796. The army did not include local inhabitants but consisted mostly of imported Malays. In 1874, the Ceylon military was determined superfluous and the Malays became the first police officers of the country.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka's Military: The Search for a Mission 1949–2004* (San Diego, CA: Aventine Press, 2004), 21.



In 1881, the British formed the Ceylon Light Infantry Volunteers (CLIV) with Europeans and Ceylonese under the honorary command of the Prince of Wales. Today SLAF Army sees this as their beginning. In 1910 the CLIV was renamed Ceylon Defense Force and mobilized in 1914 in response to the WWI. The Ceylonese's only preformed guard duties during the First World War. During the Second World War, Indian troops under British control were brought to protect Ceylon from Japanese invasion. After the surrender of Japan, Ceylon was no longer strategically relevant and the Ceylon Defense Force was demobilized. The Royal Air Force handled air security roles; no Ceylonese men were eligible to join the force. The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (CRNVR) was established due to wartime requirements and Sinhalese and Tamil received training from the British.<sup>182</sup>

When Ceylon was granted dominion status in 1948, the country knew the formation of a capable military of its own would take time. Fearing a threat to the sovereignty of the island from its larger, and powerful neighbor, India, Ceylon entered into the British Commonwealth and on 11 November 1947 signed a "Defense and External Affairs Agreement."<sup>183</sup>

The postcolonial government recognized that its military could not defend the country, or its government because of the small size of the Army and the Navy and the almost non-existent Air Force. The Army Act, in 1949, created the Royal Ceylon Army with both regular and volunteer forces. At the request of the government, a British officer initially sent as an adviser, took command of the Army as its first commander. The government also established a Royal Ceylon Air Force (RCAF) with an ex-Royal Air Force officer as Commander. The initial Air Force did not have a single aircraft.<sup>184</sup> The

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182. Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka's Military: The Search for a Mission 1949–2004*, 22–24.

183. Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka's Military: The search for a Mission 1949–2004*, 22–24.

184. "SLAF History: In the Beginning," Sri Lanka Air Force Web site, accessed 20 February 2012, <http://www.airforce.lk/history.php>.

Royal Ceylon Navy was formed with the use of men from the CRNVR on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1950 with the passing of the Ceylon Navy Act. The HMCeyS Vijaya was the only vessel in its command.<sup>185</sup>

The armed forces were incapable of truly protecting the country and with no signs of eminent conflict, resorted to the “guard[ing] the coast and air space of the island and the assist[ing] the police in internal security duties, for static guards and ceremonial duty.”<sup>186</sup>

During the 1960s, the military attempted two coups to replace the government in power. Though the attempts were unsuccessful, they made the government question the loyalty of the armed forces and were instrumental in hampering the modernization of the military. The government had begun to reevaluate the defense policy of the country.<sup>187</sup>

The first true test for the military came in 1971 with the JVP insurrection. “For the first time in post-independence history, the Army was involved in active combat.”<sup>188</sup> After several months of vicious fighting, the army managed to defeat the insurgents, however not without many of their flaws coming to light. For the first time, the government accepted assistance in the form of military aid from communist countries. China facilitated the purchase of five patrol boats, twelve artillery pieces and small arms, while the USSR provided the funds for the purchase of six MiG fighters, two helicopters, and ten BTR-152 with spare parts and ammunition.<sup>189</sup>

In 1972, the country renounced its dominion status with the British and renamed itself the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. During this time, Tamil militancy was also intensifying its activities in the North and East. The Army’s mission began to focus on the defense of the country from internal conflict. By the turn of the 1970s, the military as engaged in conducting operations against the Tamil Militant groups operating

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185. “History,” Sri Lanka Navy Web Site, accessed 20 February 2012, <http://www.navy.lk/index.php?id=510>.

186 Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka’s Military: The search for a Mission 1949–2004*, 50.

187 Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka’s Military: The search for a Mission 1949–2004*, 50–55.

188 “Operations,” Sri Lanka Army Web accessed on 10 April 2012, <http://army.lk/operations.php>

189 Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka’s Military: The search for a Mission 1949–2004*, 64.

in the North and East. LTTE, TELO and PLOT were the most prominent groups. There was no single, or primary militant group that the military targeted during this time. Many of the groups were conducting hit and run operations and most were considered criminal groups rather than full blown insurgent movements.<sup>190</sup>

On the 23 July 1983, 13 soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army were ambushed and killed by the LTTE at Thirunelveli, in Jaffna. This single event is considered to be the beginning of the Eelam war. The LTTE was becoming the most prominent militant force in the region, partially through the attacks on the Sri Lankan government and partially by eliminating its competition.

The first offensive military operation in the military history of Sri Lanka was launched on 26 May 1987. “Operation Liberation” proposed to gain control of the Vadamarachchi area in the Jaffna peninsula. It was comprised of two brigades, under the command of Lt. Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa and Maj. Gen. Vijaya Wimalaratne, who successfully captured the Vadamarachchi area in five days. Even at the very beginning of the war, the LTTE had no way of withstanding a conventional war against the Sri Lankan military. The second phase of the operation was to gain control of the entire Jaffna peninsula. With the signing of the Indo-Lanka accord and the arrival of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in 1987, the SLAF Army was forced to withdraw from the North and East.<sup>191</sup>

While the other militant groups, most of them trained by the RAW, decided to surrender and hand-over their arms, the LTTE resisted. . With the growing resentment in the country to the IPKF presence, the President requested the Indian government to

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190 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Market Information Systems, 2000).

191 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 22–28.

withdraw its troops. The Sri Lankan government covertly supplied arms to the LTTE in order to fight the IPKF, and force India to withdraw.<sup>192</sup>

Since the military establishment in the North and East was withdrawn, and with the IPKF's return to India, the LTTE managed to destroy the Indian backed Tamil National Army and gain overall control of the North and East. With LTTE in full control, the Sri Lankan military was forced to obtain passes and permission to travel in the area.

Whenever the army had to venture out, a pass had to be obtained from the LTTE... Officer [SLAF] had to stop at every checkpoint to show his pass to the LTTE... Most of the Senior [SLAF Military] officers refrained from travelling outside their camps, to avoid embarrassment.<sup>193</sup>

Under the CFA of 1990, the LTTE fortified their defenses and formed conventional military capability and defense lines. The LTTE actually violated this agreement but the Sri Lankan military remained unresponsive. The LTTE and the government held talks prior to the Eelam War II. After the negotiation efforts failed in June 1990, the first outbreak of violence was reported in Ampara and Batticaloa areas where large numbers of police personnel were captured and slaughtered by the LTTE.<sup>194</sup>

Two brigades were launched under the command of Brigadier R. De .S. Daluwatte, the Area Commander for Ampara and Batticaloa, and Lieutenant Gen Kobbekaduwa, responsible for the operations in the Eastern Province. The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Group was tasked to reinforce the Kalavanchikudi camp held by a company of 6th Battalion, Sri Lanka Light Infantry, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Group was assigned to

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192 Both Major General (rtd) Sarath Munasinghe in his book, "A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka and Professor Rohan Gunaratne in his book Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: the Role of India's Intelligence Agencies*, talk about the Indian Intelligence and IPKF military operations in Sri Lanka. Chapter IV of this study also discusses the Indian involvement in the country.

193 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 98.

194 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 101 and "Operations," Sri Lanka Army Web accessed on 10 April 2012, <http://army.lk/operations.php>.

reinforce the Kiran camp held by a company of the 1st Battalion, The Gemunu Watch. In a week's time, the two brigades were able to break the siege on the two camps.<sup>195</sup>

The northern Army bases were Palaly, Jaffna Fort, Mankulam, Kokavil, Elephant Pass, Mullaithivu, Kilinochchi and Mannar. Due to the presence of the IPKF and the subsequent peace talks, the numbers in the bases, and the perimeters in the larger camps like Palaly were reduced. The lack of a land route forced the Army to depend on the Air Force for troop reinforcements and combat supplies. The air strip in Palaly was directly under the enemy. However the determined pilots of the Sri Lanka Air Force were able to bring in reinforcements despite a heavy volume of enemy fire. Operation JAYASHAKTI was launched to regain the Palaly camp in order to facilitate aircraft landing.<sup>196</sup>

“Operation Tiger Hunt” was initially designed in three phases to gain ground lost in the north after the IPKF intervention. After the completion of the Phase I, the government's

emphasis changed all of a sudden, from North to East. [and] Gen. Kobbekaduwa [General in Command North: Major General Denzil Kobbekaduwa] had to manage with whatever resources available and protect some isolated camps besides providing protection to threatened villages.<sup>197</sup>

The lack of sufficient military was a key issue faced during the war before 2006. Often operations directed at one province would deplete the resources of the other, giving the LTTE the ability to oscillate between the two provinces.

From June 1990 (the outset of Eelam War II) to the declaration of the third cease-fire agreement on 8 January 1995, the Sri Lankan government forces managed to successfully align the conventional full-scale operations in either the North or East. The

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195 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 111 and “Operations,” Sri Lanka Army Web accessed on 10 April 2012, <http://army.lk/operations.php>.

196 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 111 and “Operations,” Sri Lanka Army Web accessed on 10 April 2012, <http://army.lk/operations.php>.

197 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 112.

LTTE began to use unconventional and semi-conventional tactics. These included suicide attacks followed by raids. Unceasing waves of attacks using suicide troops on the first few waves to break through the forward defenses, and use of improvised armored vehicles (earth moving equipment rigged to provide cover to raiding forces, etc.). At the same time, the LTTE continued to attack Naval targets using suicide divers, and conducted well-planned terrorist attacks on the country's capital Colombo and other areas. The LTTE managed to assassinate the President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, who had earlier supported the LTTE and armed the LTTE in their fight against the IPKF. President Premadasa was assassinated on 1 May 1993 on Armour Street, in Colombo while attending a May Day march. This was the second successful assassination of a head of state by the LTTE, and the first by a terrorist outfit.<sup>198</sup>

From the start of the Eelam War II, the SLAF noticed the need for a modernized weapon system to fight the LTTE. The current arsenal was in poor condition and difficult to find ammunition for the older models of weapons that had gone out of date. Western countries during this time refused to sell newer weapons to Sri Lanka. The SLAF had to look to China and the former Soviet countries for armament. The new weapons required considerable time spent on training, a hurdle that the Army had to overcome to fight efficiently.<sup>199</sup> In 1990, the army had the strength of 50,000 men, almost half of which were mobilized volunteers. The numbers KIA and MIA, combined with those who had deserted, hampered the growth of the Army. The Navy did not have the same hardships in retention because it was not strictly involved in the combat. Rather the Navy's mission was to support the Army by providing supplies to the cut-off bases in Jaffna by sea and prevent supplies and support from south India. The Navy also updated its fleet and for the first time Dvora crafts were added to the fleet to replace the aging patrol boats.<sup>200</sup>

In 1994, the People's Alliance, a coalition led by the SLFP came to power. During the elections held in November same year, the incumbent Prime Minister

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198 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 110–140.

199 Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka's Military: The search for a Mission 1949–2004*, 116.

200 Brian Blodgett, *Sri Lanka's Military: The search for a Mission 1949–2004*, 129–130.

Kumaranathunga was elected fourth Executive President of Sri Lanka, and the Commander-in-Chief. The President wanted to try her hand at peace negotiations with the LTTE at first, especially with the war causing mass casualties and creating economic problems. The President came to power on a platform of restarting peace negotiations and bringing about an end to the war.

The government did not withdraw its positions and the troops were put on alert during the cease-fire. This was a lesson learned from the past instances of cease-fire and negotiations with the LTTE who spent the temporary peace building up both their human and material requirements for future wars. The government also formulated plans for offensive and defense operations and plans for procurement to be used if the LTTE backed out of the peace talks. Still, they were unable to prevent the Navy from losing two ships harbored inside the main Navy base in Trincomalee. Fully trained suicide frogmen of the LTTE planted explosives on Sri Lanka Navy Ships (SLNS) SOORAYA and SLNA RANASURU. The new outbreak of violence saw the LTTE advancing its armament to include newer weapons including shoulder fired surface-to-air missiles (SAM). The LTTE shot down two SLAF Air Force AVRO aircrafts using these new weapons.<sup>201</sup>

This event marked the beginning of what is now referred to as Eelam War III. The SLAF were prepared to launch an offensive however they were unable to prevent LTTE suicide bombers from infiltrating the government controlled areas. Eelam War III, from 19 April 1995 and onward, saw the LTTE adopting a “no-taking prisoners” strategy. An example of this was when the LTTE overran the “Mullativu base complex in July 1996 and killed all surrendered soldiers.” SLAF conducted “Operation Riviresa One,” launched on 17 October 1995 to regain control of the Valikamam area of the Jaffna peninsula. After an intense battle Valikamam was cut off from the Vadamarachchi and Tenamarachchi areas forcing the LTTE to withdraw from Jaffna Town. The new government, under a banner of a “war for peace,” succeeded in bringing Jaffna under Sri

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201 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 141–144.

Lankan control on 2 December 1995, for the first time in 12 years.<sup>202</sup> However, most of the LTTE had managed to withdraw after stripping all useable equipment from the town.<sup>203</sup>

After March 1997, the government pushed a campaign to open a military supply route to the Jaffna Peninsula. If successful, the offensive would have split the LTTE forces and strengthened the government's bargaining position with both the LTTE and Sinhalese extremists. However, like the 50,000 IPKF men before them, 20,000 SLAF troops were unsuccessful. The campaign created a great hardship for the people of the region and left another thousand young men dead.<sup>204</sup> The Army conducted limited clearing operations in the North and East after this until “Operation Jayasikuru [operation Definite Victory]” on 13 May 1997. The aim of the operation was to regain control of the LTTE stronghold in the Wanni jungle and to open up land routes to link Kilinochchi and Wanni districts with Jaffna. This operation also saw a change in SLAF Army’s way of war fighting; when it employed most of its divisions and brigades to conduct “multidirectional, multipronged” offensives against the enemy. Simultaneously, the SLAF launched an offensive aimed at capturing Oddusudan town and the Nedunkerny – Oddusudan road which would further restrict the LTTE’s movements. The operation succeeded due to the change in strategy. For the first time since its inception, the SLAF Army had conducted two large scale operations in two separate theaters of war. Operation Jayasikuru was halted before it could achieve its stated goals in 1999 because the leadership of the military and political authority decided to change strategy. Instead the Army launched “Operation Ranagosa” in Wanni and Mannar district. The Army conducted a series of operations but by reverting to the practice of conducting single major offensives in a single operation area, the LTTE was again given freedom to regroup and reorganize. After a string of successful attacks on smaller SLAF

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202 Kyung Mook Kim, “History of the Civil War in Sri Lanka since 1983,” Korean Minjok Leadership Academy, accessed 10 April 2012, <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/sp/0809/kyungmook/kyungmook1.html#eelamwar3>.

203 Kyung Mook Kim, “History of the Civil War in Sri Lanka since 1983.”

204 Kyung Mook Kim, “History of the Civil War in Sri Lanka since 1983.”



fortifications which “gifted”<sup>205</sup> the LTTE with a considerable weapons and ammunition windfall including heavy weapons, the LTTE launched a massive offensive against Elephant Pass (also called EPS) at 2.20am on 11 December 1999. By this time, LTTE had perfected their notorious “unceasing waves” concept, which called for wave after wave of suicide bombers to overwhelm the defenses of a military, while the raiding force found a suitable weak point to breakthrough. After this major setback in EPS, SLAF was determined to defend Jaffna from falling.<sup>206</sup>

Prior to the presidential election day, on 18 December 1999 the LTTE managed to launch another suicide bomber in hopes of assassinating the incumbent president. The assassination attempt failed when the President escaped with minor injuries, and the loss of one eye.<sup>207</sup> She was later reelected for her second term. After this, the SLAF launched a series of offensives in hopes of limiting the LTTE’s movements. These included Operation Kinihira (17 September 2000), Operation Kinihira II (26 September 2000), Operation Kinihira III and IV (19 November 2000), Operation Kinihira V (16 December 2000), Operation Kinihira VIII (30 December 2000), Operation Kinihira XI (06 January 2001). These operations managed to capture the area conceded to the LTTE during its series of unceasing waves.<sup>208</sup> With these successful operations, and the changing nature of global perception of terrorism and terrorist groups after the 9/11 attacks, the LTTE entered into another round of negotiations with the GoSL and declared unilateral cease-fire.

The Sri Lankan government was under serious economic disarray after the attack on Sri Lanka’s International airport in 24 July 2001, causing \$1 billion worth of

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205 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 212.

206 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 139–217.

207 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 216 and “Chronology of Suicide Bomb Attacks by LTTE Tamil Tiger Terrorists in Sri Lanka” accessed 10 April 2012, [http://www.spur.asn.au/chronology\\_of\\_suicide\\_bomb\\_attacks\\_by\\_Tamil\\_Tigers\\_in\\_sri\\_Lanka.htm](http://www.spur.asn.au/chronology_of_suicide_bomb_attacks_by_Tamil_Tigers_in_sri_Lanka.htm).

208 Based on a Presentation on the topic of “Counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka” made to the Pakistan Military Academy by Lt.Col. Lakshan De Silva of the Sri Lanka Army while attending the Pakistan Military Staff College program. The said officer was attending Naval Postgraduate School during the time of this writing, allowing first-hand experience sharing with the author.

damage.<sup>209</sup>The opposition was criticizing the “war for peace” strategy of the government, publicizing it as unsuccessful the cause for the country’s economic problems.<sup>210</sup>The LTTE’s ability to cause widespread terror with their suicide bombers during the Eelam War III and their successes at some stages of the war helped make the case for the opposition. Their propaganda efforts helped the opposition to a victory in the parliamentary elections of On 19 December, and with the facilitation of Norway, the LTTE announced another 30-day cease-fire and the new government halted all offensive military action two days later ending the Eelam War III.<sup>211</sup>

During Eelam War III, the GoSL again remained focused on an “annihilation and land domination and land grabbing”<sup>212</sup> strategy of warfare which was conventional in thinking. The aim was to kill the LTTE members and thereby gain control of the land held by them. These strategies did not have any COIN aspects and the civil population was not a concern for the military when it became clear that the LTTE had infiltrated civil society in the areas in question. Also the military had no answer to the suicide techniques employed by the LTTE. The government could not ensure security even in areas where the war was not being fought. The “biggest problem Army faced with the lack of resources. More than material, the real problem man power.”<sup>213</sup> The lack of sufficient forces to conduct operations and hold ground was evident from the beginning of the conflict but the successive governments did not succeed in addressing this deficiency. While the SLAF had a clear strategy of land domination it did not have the troops to do this. The other main concern of the military during the Eelam war II and III was desertion. By own admission of senior officers serving during this time, one reason for “Soldiers desert[ing] the battlefield mainly due to weak and immature leadership.”

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209 Kyung Mook Kim, “History of the Civil War in Sri Lanka since 1983.”

210 Kyung Mook Kim, “History of the Civil War in Sri Lanka since 1983.”

211 Based on a Presentation on the topic of “Counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka” made to the Pakistan Military Academy by Lt.Col. Lakshan De Silva of the Sri Lanka Army while attending the Pakistan Military Staff College program. The said officer was attending Naval Postgraduate School during the time of this writing, allowing first hand experience sharing with the author.

212 Ibid.

213 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 218.

Other reasons included a lack of continuous training, the administrations inability to provide food, basic essentials and leave for soldiers. Wartime recruitment was difficult, especially with the weakened status of the military and criticism by the opposition on the war. Furthermore the apparent lack of caring for the welfare of the military, especially the injured and the families of fallen, did not encourage enlistment.<sup>214</sup>

During the war the LTTE managed to utilize its international support and media network to the fullest extent. SLAF did not have any experience in handling either public relations or media properly. The population was not informed of the successes or failures of the military, which was taken advantage of by the LTTE and its media network.

The intelligence aspect of the military was primitive and in development. The different state and military intelligence units did not coordinate or share information with one another or with international intelligence agencies properly. Intercepted enemy transmissions were considered reliable sources of information making it easy for the enemy to supply false information. Because of the nature of the insurgency and their tactics, it was difficult for the Sri Lankan military to obtain a true numerical assessment of the LTTE's strength. The military was also at best a novice in the field of "psychological operations."<sup>215</sup>

Eelam War III was the end of an era of conventional thinking for the SLAF. When the military resumed its offensive in 2006, there is a clear shift in strategy and while the military did not abandon its conventional mindset, it began to address the more unconventional aspects of the LTTE insurgency.

The LTTE, on 21 July 2006, while still officially engaged in CFA and negotiations, decided to close and hold the Mavil Aru sluice gates in the Eastern province. These sluice gates provided water for 30,000 acres of paddy fields and the timing of the closing was pre-harvest when water was most needed for farmers cultivating these lands. Even prior to this, minor violations had occurred on both sides but

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214 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 219–220.

215 Sarath Munasinghe, *A soldier's version: An account of the on-going conflict and the origin of terrorism in Sri Lanka*, 226–228.

had not effected negotiations.<sup>216</sup> The military response of the GoSL to the closing of the sluice gate was considered the start of the Eelam War IV also known as the “Humanitarian Operations” or “Wanni Humanitarian Operation.” For the purpose of this research the terms are used synonymously to refer to the military operations by the SLAF against the LTTE from July 2006 to May 2009.

The closing of the Maavil Aru sluice gates gave the GoSL a justifiable reason to launch an offensive (while still under the CFA) by citing humanitarian concerns for the lives of the farmers dependent on the water that had been blocked.<sup>217</sup> The SLAF Army Special Forces spearheaded “Operation Watershed.”<sup>218</sup> The breakout of violence from this operation moved on to Muttur, where on 8 August 2006 the SLAF Army Commando’s aided by the SLAF Navy intervened to carry out another operation after “LTTE terrorists expelled over 42000 innocent Muslim civilians from Muttur directing an attack towards Muttur.”<sup>219</sup> While neither the GoSL or the LTTE officially denounced the CFA at this time, it was clear full-scale military action had resumed by both sides. In fact, it was in January 2008 that the government officially withdrew from the CFA.<sup>220</sup> The fall of the most prominent LTTE strongholds of Toppigalla and Sampur marked the end of Tiger domination in the East. The Army conducted its operation along multiple lines of operations. The decision to resume offensive military action in the East was for several reasons:

- The enemy positions in Sampur posed the greatest threat to the countries largest and main naval base in Trincomalle. These concerns were “backed

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216 During the Peace negotiations and the enforcement of the CFA, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) reported on the violations committed by both the SLAF, the LTTE and other paramilitary organizations affiliated with either. These can be found at <http://www.slmm-history.info>.

217 “Humanitarian Operation Fact analysis,” A Document presented to the Foreign Missions by the Ministry of Defense, Sri Lanka.

218 “Operations,” Sri Lanka Army Web, accessed on 10 April 2012, <http://army.lk/opdetail.php?id=15>.

219 “Operations,” Sri Lanka Army Web, accessed on 10 April 2012, <http://army.lk/opdetail.php?id=15>.

220 “Sri Lanka withdraws from CFA,” TamilNet, <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=24166>.

by a United States Military advisory team which visited the island in 2005 as well.”<sup>221</sup>

- The East has always been multiethnic with a large number of Muslims and Sinhalese living among the Tamil majority.
- The LTTE action in Muttur by attacking civilian and military there and in Mavil Aru by closing the slice gates
- The defection of eastern LTTE leader Col. Karuna Amman had made the LTTE weak in the region.

Tigers in the face of advancing SLAF, decided to withdraw from the East to the jungles of Wanni and Mulative. Meanwhile the LTTE continued to carry-out attacks against civilian and government locations in the South unhindered. These included an attack on a SLAF Navy transit location in Habarana where sailors returning home on leave were targeted by an LTTE suicide bomber. The resulting death toll of 93 was considered the most deadly attack by LTTE suicide bombers on the Navy.<sup>222</sup> More than 15 suicide bombers attacked the SLAF Navy’s southern area command headquarters in Galle.<sup>223</sup>

After the East was declared clear by the President, the government commenced immediate development projects. This was a shift from previous governments, which wanted the military to hold ground till until the entire threat was removed. The GoSL also initiated measures to establish civilian control in the East. The Eastern provincial elections were held for the first time in 20 years.<sup>224</sup>

While sporadic fighting had been seen in the north, the government’s main focus had been on the East until the clearing of Thoppigalla. The Army suffered a shortage of troops to conduct offensives in both theaters (even with the unprecedented increase of troops) and handed over control of section of the liberated East to both Navy and Air

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<sup>221</sup> Lakshan Silva’s presentation to the Pakistan Military Academy.

<sup>222</sup> “LTTE’s suicide attack at Habarana; Death toll rises to 92,” Sri Lanka Defense Ministry web site last modified 12/30/2010 [http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20061016\\_07](http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20061016_07).

<sup>223</sup> Iqbal Athas, “Situation Report,” *Sunday Times*, accessed <http://sundaytimes.lk/061022/Columns/sitreport.html>.

<sup>224</sup> P.K. Balachandran, “Sri Lanka to hold eastern provincial elections in May,” India eNews, <http://www.indiaenews.com/srilanka/20080312/103864.htm>.

force, maintaining only a limited presence in the area. The Civil Defense Force also was employed to assist the military hold its ground in the East.

Until late 2007, the Sri Lankan Army's 57th division was conducting operations west of Omanthei. With the emphasis now shifting to the northern theater of war, plans were formulated to capture Silawathuai and Arippu in order to lessen the LTTE threat to the Mannar – Vavunia main road. Sri Lanka Army Special Forces groups were inducted into the area on 29 August 2007 and on 2 September, they captured Silawaturai, Arippu and Kondachchi with the support of the infantry. On 25 September 2007, troops from the 57th Division captured the Forward Defense Line (FDL) at Periyathampanai, Villaththakulam and Mullikulam. Meanwhile Task Force One was advancing on the western flanks of the 57th Division. Madhu church, a symbolic location for Roman Catholics in the country was liberated on 24 April 2008.<sup>225</sup> The troops from 58 Division captured Adappan, which opened access to Northeastern parts of Mannar on 9 May 2008.

Meanwhile, the 59<sup>th</sup> Division was sent to conduct operations North of Welioya in January of 2008; they captured the “Munakkam base,” the LTTE's main supply base in the area on 29 May 2008.<sup>226</sup> Task Force Two, established to conduct operations east of A-9 road (main road connecting Jaffna to the rest of the country) began their advances from Mundimuruppu on 17 June 2008. On 30 June 2008 troops from the 58<sup>th</sup> Division advancing from Pallaimadu and the 57<sup>th</sup> Division from Periyamadu joined up and successfully cleared the Mannar area. On 16 July 2008, the 58<sup>th</sup> Division made a surprising deviation, moved in and gained control of Vedithalathivu, a sea tiger base which had evaded SLAF attacks for 21 years. The 59<sup>th</sup> Division advancing from the eastern front of the Wanni captured two main LTTE bases in Mulativu jungles by 24 July 2008. The troops from the 53<sup>rd</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Divisions which included the newly formed Mechanized Infantry overran LTTE first line defenses from Killali to Nagarkovil by 27 July 2008.

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<sup>225</sup> “Operations,” Sri Lanka Army Web accessed on 10 April 2012, <http://www.army.lk/opdetail.php?id=31>.

<sup>226</sup> “Operations,” Sri Lanka Army Web accessed on 10 April 2012, <http://www.army.lk/opdetail.php?id=35>.

The 57<sup>th</sup> Division moved toward the most important Tiger position, Killinochchi, the de facto capital of the LTTE administration. This battle forced the Army to shift from the jungle to combat in an urbanized area. On 15 November 2008, Pooneryn was liberated and the Army managed to open up the A-32 Jaffna – Colombo land supply routes which had been closed for almost 20 years. The fight to capture the Tiger capital Killinochchi was fierce, however, the SLAF led by the 57<sup>th</sup> Division entered the LTTE capital from the South and the 58<sup>th</sup> Division arrived from the Northwest and together prevailed.<sup>227</sup>

The main issue at this time for the Army moving from the jungle to urban areas was minimizing the impact on the innocent civilian population. The GoSL, understanding the importance of safeguarding the civilian population, for the first time in its military history, ordered the Army to establish a No Fire Zone (NFZ). The NFZ was east of Puthukkuduyirippu. The LTTE took this opportunity to move into the NFZ, one of their most effective tactics, and to escape the Army's long range heavy weaponry and to launch attacks using their own artillery and other heavy weapons under the shield of the innocent civilian population.<sup>228</sup>

The LTTE, settled into the NFZ with heavy artillery and began to launch attacks on SLAF positions with the civilians as human shields. Understanding the damage that heavy weaponry could cause, especially targeted inside these NFZ, the military turned to its special operations forces for a solution. The operation was planned as a hostage rescue mission rather than a military offensive. The Commanders and SF troops supported by four infantry battalions moved closer to the NFZ, under heavy enemy fire. They came approximately 300 meters from the LTTE earth barrier, created to shield the LTTE from the Army and to prevent the civilians from landscaping their hold. Without the use of heavy weapons the advancing Special Operation Forces (SOF) were completely without

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<sup>227</sup> Based on a Presentation on the topic of “Counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka” made to the Pakistan Military Academy by Lt.Col. Lakshan De Silva of the Sri Lanka Army while attending the Pakistan Military Staff College program. The said officer was attending Naval Postgraduate School during the time of this writing, allowing first hand experience sharing with the author. Also supplemented by authors own experience as a officer in the Sri Lanka Navy during this period and his personal communications with Officer and other ranks of the Sri Lanka Army, who served during this time period.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

supporting firepower. The first attempts to advance toward the earth barriers from both south and north resulted in casualties for the SOF troops. But on 19 April 2009, troops using the cover of darkness managed to reach the earth barriers with troops from the Special Forces Regiment arriving from the south, and the Commando Regiment coming from the north. With the two earth barriers under Army control, the civilians had a clear route to flee away from the fighting. It is estimated over 115,000 civilians were rescued from the NFZ.<sup>229</sup>

With two divisions, the 53<sup>rd</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup> moving towards each other, the SLAF were able to liberate a great deal of land from LTTE control. On 16 May 2009, troops advancing towards each other linked up along the coastline confining the LTTE into a 1000 x 500m in Vellamullivaikkal. On 19 May 2009, the body of the dead LTTE leader was found and identified along with some of his top aids, bringing an end to the Eelam war.<sup>230</sup>

#### **B. DISTINGUISHABLE ADAPTATIONS THE SLAF MADE FROM PRE-2006 TO POST-2006**

There are certain distinct changes that the SLAF went through during this time. These were organizational, strategic, operational and tactical.

**Organizationally** one of the most important changes in the SLAF culture is the replacement of “first come, first promoted” policy for senior officers into performance based promotional policy. In regard to the selecting senior most officer to the leadership seats in all three services, the ruling government and President would previously consider the political affiliations of the senior officers before appointing them. This method was abandoned by the current government and replaced with performance-based appointments. Also from its inception, the seniority of the officers had been one of the major factors in making appointments. If an officer “survived” rather than “performed” without any serious mistakes, he would be assured of a promotion to the highest ranking. The government valued obedience over innovative thinking. This immediately changed

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.



with the new government when it appointed VADM Wasantha Karranagodda as Commander of the Navy, who had seven considerably senior officers above him. He was also the first to be appointed directly from an area commander designation instead from a headquarters designation. The second example of the new government's policy came when LtGen Sarath Fonseka was appointed as Commander of the Army. General Fonseka clearly had different political affiliations; the main reason the previous president had overlooked him for the post, despite his commendable battle field performance. He was two weeks away from compulsory retirement when the new president issued a presidential order to extend his service and appointed him to Command the Army during the final war. This new policy was not isolated to the top. In the Army usually "it is the No.5 officer in terms of seniority who is posted to the Jaffna Security Forces HQ. [But] In this case the person appointed was No.15 in seniority." Also some junior officers put in charge of the divisions. "Brigadier Shaverndra Silva, for example, who spearheaded the capture of Pooneryn is [was] the 45<sup>th</sup> in terms of seniority." As these examples showed, performance was now being rewarded in the SLAF.<sup>231</sup>

The next organizational change came in procurement and training. In terms of logistics, instead of using private organizations as middlemen between government-to-government sales, the ministry of defense established a subsidiary company "Lanka Logistics" to handle these transactions. The company also handled purchases from private organizations. Also because the organization was under the government and Ministry of Defense, the needs of the SLAF were more accurately translated rather than previously when the political authority bought what they thought the military "should have." These miscommunications had caused many incompatible and unusable weapon systems such as the SLAF Navy's hovercrafts, which were never used in combat.<sup>232</sup>

**Strategically** the SLAF moved away from the annihilation-based strategy to an attrition-based strategy. The conventional military might of the SLAF has never been matched by the LTTE. During the major offensives from 1995–2001, large LTTE

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231 Malinda Senevirathne, "The Man of The Moment," *Business Today* 13, no. 8 (2008): 19.

232 Author's knowledge as an Officer of the Sri Lanka Navy and also his personal communications with senior serving and retired officers of the Sri Lanka Navy.

controlled territories were recaptured by the SLAF. In response, the LTTE would withdraw from one theater to the other employ guerilla tactics against the SLAF. The Army leadership at the time did not understand that their strategy to annihilate LTTE was not working. During the 2006 final war, the Army clearly understood they needed to shift their focus from retaking land to destroying the LTTE themselves.

The military underwent operational changes too. During this time, the Army conducted the war on multiple lines of advance. When the shift was made from the East to the Wanni (North) theater, there were five infantry Divisions operating on different axes. With the resources the LTTE had, to conventionally hold these multiple advances was clearly impossible. For the first time in its history, the Sri Lankan military leadership and political leadership understood the need for engaging and informing the public and the international population of the war. At the same time, the Army understood the need to control the information flow. Their solution was the establishment of the Media Centre for National Security and allowing the media to have permanent TV crews embedded with the advancing army. On several important occasions, even International media was allowed to intermingle with these troops. This information flow was critically monitored and controlled allowing the Army to control what was said and how it was said in order to guide the perception of the public and the international community on the progress the Army was making.<sup>233</sup>

Another key change with regard to military operations was the management of security in the capital and suburbs. Terrorist attacks on key locations like the oil refinery and international airport were disruptive and negatively affected the economy. The attacks on civilian population were aimed at the psychology of the population who supported the government. In the past, these attacks had created massive responses of fear and intimidation, which eventually forced governments in power to halt or weaken their military offensives, implying that the LTTE had the upper hand. According to the

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<sup>233</sup> Based on a Presentation on the topic of “Counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka” made to the Pakistan Military Academy by Lt.Col. Lakshan De Silva of the Sri Lanka Army while attending the Pakistan Military Staff College program. The said officer was attending Naval Postgraduate School during the time of this writing, allowing first hand experience sharing with the author. Also supplemented by author’s own experience as an officer in the Sri Lanka Navy during this period and his personal communications with Officer and other ranks of the Sri Lanka Army, who served during this time period.

Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, prior to the resumption of the Eelam War IV, “we [the GoSL] were told that if we dared launch any military operation against the LTTE, Colombo will be blown to pieces.” He further explained the “more we pin the LTTE down in to the North and East, the more they will try to execute suicide attacks and such in other parts of the country in order to destabilize the populace.”<sup>234</sup>

Stopping the infiltration of suicide bombers had always proved a problem for the SLAF. This was complicated by the fact that LTTE was believed to have sleeper suicide cells already deployed in these areas prior to the start of the Eelam War IV.<sup>235</sup>

The action the military had to take in order to prevent this kind of terrorism was not popular, especially with the international human rights and other freedom groups. As Defense Secretary Rajapaksa explained, “To do all this [provide security in the areas], we have to implement controlling measures such as road blocks, searches, detention of suspects and questioning.”<sup>236</sup>

One of the key problems the previous military commanders had faced was numbers. There simply were not enough troops to conduct all the necessary military operations. To address this, the political and military leadership adopted three distinct methodologies.

- Major recruitment drives supplemented by media and professional promotional drives to uplift the status and the moral of the military person.
- Using the local population of the war-threatened areas to protect themselves. The Civil Defense Force (CDF) was a key component of this and is discussed below.
- Using a joint security mechanism to incorporate all three forces and police in to the operation thereby not depending only on the Army for all land operational duties.<sup>237</sup>

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234 Malinda Senevirathne, “Man Behind the country’s Defense Strategy,” *Business Today* 13, no. 7 (2008): xii; see “Promise Delivered,” Independence Television Network interview with Gotabhaya Rajapaksa aired on 2008.09.18.

235 Senevirathne, “Man Behind the country’s Defense Strategy,” and “Promise Delivered,” Independence Television Network interview with Gotabhaya Rajapaksa aired on 2008.09.18

236 Malinda Senevirathne, “Man Behind the country’s Defense Strategy,” xii.

237 Ibid., xii.

### **C. CIVIL DEFENSE FORCE**

One of the most crucial yet less widely acknowledged military components relied upon in the war in Sri Lanka, is the role played by the Home Guard. Also known as the Civil Defense Force (CDF), it is an auxiliary military component that is made up entirely of local villagers, making them part-time members of the military. The Home Guard was first established in Sri Lanka in 1985, under the Mobilization of Supplementary Force Act No. 40. Its main purpose was to assist the Sri Lanka Police in their duties and the command of the Home Guard was placed under the local police during the early stages of existence.<sup>238</sup>

Originally, the Home Guard was merely comprised of a group of volunteers, who were each issued a shotgun. Their role was to protect the villages they lived in from the constant threat of the LTTE. Villages that were in close proximity to the territory controlled by the LTTE or located close to the Army frontline were identified and classified as “threatened” or “border” villages. Due to the lack of specified boundaries, the LTTE constantly infiltrated these villages either to commit mass executions of Sinhalese or Muslims or to forcefully gather much needed resources including children, who were abducted and trained to become child soldiers. Under the control of the police, this early Home Guard system was “not very well organized, not properly trained, the men were not motivated and they were not much respected [as a competent military element].”<sup>239</sup>

The need for these auxiliary armed groups was critical, due to the limited human resources within the Sri Lanka Army that was available to provide protection to these villages. But because of their poor status of operational ability it was not a viable solution until the 2006 and the establishment of the newly reorganized CDF.<sup>240</sup>

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238. “Home guard service,” Sri Lanka Defense Ministry website, accessed on 22 February 2012, [http://www.defence.lk/main\\_abt.asp?fname=homeguard](http://www.defence.lk/main_abt.asp?fname=homeguard).

239 Udeshi Amarasinghe and Thilini Kahandawaarachchi, “Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara: Shielding the innocent,” *Business Today* 14, no.01 (2009): 10–17.

240 Amarasinghe and Kahandawaarachchi, “Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara: Shielding the innocent,” 11.

In 2006, when the LTTE resumed attacks on the civilians of these threatened villages,

The Secretary of Defence, Gotabaya Rajapaksa recommended to the President that the Home Guard Force be reorganized, restructured with better training and deployed for the protection of the threatened villages as an independent force under the Ministry of Defence.<sup>241</sup>

This resulted in the creation of the Civil Defense Force (CDF) as a separate department under the Ministry of Defense. The command of this force was removed from the police and brought under a Director General (DG-CDF). The former Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Navy, RADM Sarath Weeraseraka, was appointed as the first Director General of the CDF, with instructions to re-organize, train and equip them to take up the “full responsibility of protecting the villages [so] the Army could be relieved to engage in the primary task.”<sup>242</sup> The first task implemented by the new DG-CDF was to conduct an analysis of the villages that were to be protected by the CDF, and initiate a recruitment program to increase the numbers. As in 2006 there were only 19,200 members. By 2009, the CDF’s increased to 41,500 personnel and was assisting the military in protecting the main supply routes and the Forward Defense Lines while fully undertaking the village protection duties.<sup>243</sup>

Some of the main differences between the previous Home Guard system and the CDF were that CDF personnel were paid a stipend, and were issued military grade uniforms, which include combat camouflage, to improve their visible status. The CDF’s training included a compulsory one-month basic military training at CDF training centers under Sri Lanka Army and Sri Lanka Navy instructors. They were also provided advance training at SLAF Army and Navy bases. The SLAF Commando Regiment and Special Forces Regiment provided selected CDF personnel with Special Forces training for ten weeks and then grouped them in an elite group named "Nandimitra Balakaya." They were

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241 Amarasinghe and Kahandawaarachchi, “Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara: Shielding the innocent,” 10.

242 Amarasinghe and Kahandawaarachchi, “Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara: Shielding the innocent,” 10.

243 Amarasinghe and Kahandawaarachchi, “Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara: Shielding the innocent,” 10.

also trained in tradecraft beyond their basic training, included night fighting, ambushes and unarmed combat. They were used as a deterrent; as means of holding off an enemy attack till the SLAF Army or Navy could reach these villages. Additionally, the CDF was issued Chinese-made Type-56 sub machine guns and MPMG that the Army was using in place of their old bore-12 shotguns. They were even issued advance equipment such as night vision optics and explosives.<sup>244</sup>

Most significantly the CDF was incorporated into the larger military operations and security plans. By doing so, the SLAF effectively engaged the population in their own protection. As these CDF personnel were farmers and others ordinary members from the villages, they were directly affected by the ongoing insurgency and invested because they were there to “protect their villages, where their own kith and kin are, there is an additional reason for them to protect the village than an outsider [referring to the Army, Navy, Air Force or police personnel].” It was also their duty to report to the military commanders responsible for the security of the area about “lapses of the village security” and to engage with all the villagers including and head priest and/or the senior folk in the village.<sup>245</sup>

As a whole the re-organized CDF was instrumental in deterring and repelling LTTE infiltrations and terrorist attacks on the border villages during the 2006 – 2009 military operations, which saw the end of the LTTE. It was a critical component, as it was comprised of ordinary citizens from the villages that were in need of protection, giving the CDF a greater stake in how they choose to engage the LTTE. It also provided a means of securing quality intelligence from within these villages to the refocusing of the military upon offensive operations.

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<sup>244</sup> Amarasinghe and Kahandawaarachchi, “Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara: Shielding the innocent,” 10–12.

<sup>245</sup> Amarasinghe and Kahandawaarachchi, “Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara: Shielding the innocent,” 10–13.

#### **D. SPECIAL INFANTRY OPERATION TEAMS AND ADVANCE INFANTRY OPERATION TRAINING**

Another change the Army made as a solution for increasing its numbers and improving the professionalism of its soldiers was the concept of Special Infantry Operation Teams (SIOT). The SIOT concept calls for creating small team inside infantry battalions, who were trained by SOF to conduct small team operations. These soldiers' training emphasized small team operations and they were an asset to the infantry platoons. The concept called for the better training and equipment of the individual soldiers, something normal infantry training and operation do not emphasize. These 8-man teams received specialized training in jungle warfare, explosives, and communications, which enabled these troops to conduct deep infiltration hit and run operations, call in and direct artillery and air strikes. These troops were embedded inside with regular troops (unlike SOF), which was an effort to defuse the training to the regular infantry and also to improve the standards of the infantry.<sup>246</sup>

The SIOT also facilitated a very important aspect in COIN operations, which was to minimize collateral damage and filter local civilian populations for combatants.

#### **E. NAVAL ADAPTATIONS: THE EMBODIMENT OF COUNTER ADAPTATION WARFARE**

The military adaptations that the Sri Lankan military made during the conflict were visible in the Navy more than anywhere else. The LTTE was considered to be one of the very few insurgent groups to have operational sea capabilities.<sup>247</sup> Dominance of the sea routes to south India, which provided the closest external sanctuary for them, and the ability to reinforce its operations by sea, proved to be crucial to the existence of the

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246 The concept of SIOT was discussed in length during the "Defeating Terrorism - Sri Lankan Experience Symposium," May 31, 2011. Also supplemented by the personal communications of the author with Sri Lanka Army officers involved in planning and implementing the concept.

247 Arabinda Acharya & Nadeeka P. Withana, "Groups with Maritime Terrorist Capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region" in V.R. Raghavan & W. Lawrence S. Prabhakar (eds.), *Maritime security in the Indian Ocean region: Critical Issues in Debate* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw- Hill, 2008), 204–207; Peter Lehr, "Asymmetric Warfare in the Indian Ocean: What Kind of Threat from What Kind of Actor," *ibid.*, 173, 178–179; . Also see, Rohan Gunaratna, "The Asymmetric Threat from Maritime Terrorism," *Jane's Navy International*, Oct 1, 2001.

LTTE. The Sea Tigers, LTTE's naval wing, were formed in the early 1980s and were highly effective, especially in their use of the Black Sea Tiger element, which was the water born unit of the Black Tigers, their elite, highly trained, and motivated suicide force.

The supreme leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran formed the Naval wing of the LTTE or the Sea Tigers' under the leadership of Thillaiyampalam Sivanesan, aka "Colonel Soosai," who was a tactical and strategic mastermind. The Sea Tigers unit was created in the early 1980s and started off using small boats and ferries to transport supplies and troops across the waters separating the north of Sri Lanka from Tamil Nadu.<sup>248</sup> The LTTE also owned its own international shipping network, which provided the equipment and supplies needed by the Tamil Tigers.

The initial attempts of the Sri Lankan Navy (SLN) to hinder these operations using its fleet of Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) were somewhat successful. The Tigers began using faster craft with more powerful engines, allowing the Sea Tiger cadres to outrun the slower SLN patrols. The Sea Tigers locally manufactured their own fiberglass fast-attack craft and equipped them with four 250 horsepower outboard engines on the larger crafts, and with two engines on the smaller boats. These boats were mainly the 45 knots "Thrikka" with four crews and a machine gun; the 10 knots "Sudai" with a single machine gun; the 45 knots "Muraj" or "Waverider" with a crew of 10; and the "Idayan," a 45 knots suicide craft. The Muraj was used mainly as command vessels and is comparable in most ways to the SLN's own IPC (Inshore Patrol Craft).

The Sea Tigers lacked their own harbors or secure launching sites. They adapted by engineering a method of launching their boats using tractors and trailers. This method enabled them to launch from any beachfront location they could access. The LTTE would

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<sup>248</sup> While there is a vast collection conflicting of literature on India and Tamil Nadu's involvement with the LTTE it is common knowledge of the region that the Tigers enjoyed the support of the population and politicians of Tamil Nadu.



hide the craft inshore, sometimes more than ten kilometers away from the beach, and would only launch when necessary. This gave the LTTE mobility, flexibility, and the element of surprise.<sup>249</sup>

The Sea Tigers' most successful innovation was their use of "wolf pack" swarm attacks.<sup>250</sup> Once they identified a target, five or more small boats of the Sea Tigers would approach the target craft, engage it from all directions, and disrupt its ability to flee the area. While these small boats attacked and engaged the target, a suicide craft would move against the target boat using the cover of the larger command vessels of the sea tigers. These suicide boats were usually small fiberglass boats manned by a single Black Tiger. The hull of the boat was packed with high explosives and rigged to a pressure trigger located at the front of the boat. This allowed the boat to trigger the IED by ramming in to the target vessel.<sup>251</sup>

The Sri Lanka Navy has its roots as a ceremonial force left behind by the British Empire, and was predominantly used as a logistic support element to the Sri Lanka Army. In the 1990s, the SLN only had large ships, mostly leftover by the Royal Navy or gifted by friendly nations. While these were well-suited for blue-water patrolling operations to safe guard against unauthorized fishing or smuggling, they definitely were no match for the heavily armed small boat coastal operations of the Sea Tigers.

By the early 1990s, the Navy understood that it needed to adapt, and become a more aggressive fighting force to counter the mounting threat of the Sea Tigers and to dominate the lagoon/mangrove areas of Jaffna peninsula and eastern areas. In response to these threats, in 1993, the Sri Lanka Armed Force's (SLAF) formed the Special Boat Squadron (SBS)—modeled after the U.K. Navy's elite Special Boat Service and the United States Navy's elite SEALs—under the command of then LCDR Ravindra Chandrasiri Wijegunaratne (presently RADM and the Northern Area Naval

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249 Author as a member of the Sri Lanka Navy's SBS has been trained and informed of the history, formations and capabilities of the LTTE and the SBS. Also his experience, the experience of his colleagues of SBS is included here.

250 The Sea Tigers also developed new tactics and operations using suicide boats, suicide submersible attacks, floating sea mines, and suicide divers.

251 Author's training, and personal experience.

Commander). The first operation carried out by the SBS was in November 1993, where it played an integral part in the recapturing of the Navy camp in Pooneryn, which had been attacked and overrun by terrorists.<sup>252</sup>

In its search for a technology to counter the Sea Tigers, the SLN found that “the Israeli navy was facing a similar threat and were using Dvora fast attack craft as a response.”<sup>253</sup> These Dvora fast attack craft provided a guard against the LTTE's logistic boats, which they used mainly to transport supplies from their ships operating in international waters and to smuggle supplies, and personnel in and out of south India. The 4<sup>th</sup> Fast Attack Flotilla of the Navy, a.k.a. the Dvora Squadron, was in the forefront of the fight against the Sea Tigers, protecting both naval and civilian transport vessels.

After the LTTE developed its “wolf pack” attacks, the Dvoras were vulnerable because of their limited maneuverability and close contact capabilities. The Sea Tigers managed to engage these Dvoras successfully, sinking more than twenty Sri Lanka Navy’s Dvora-class, Fast Attack Boats.<sup>254</sup> The Sea Tigers continued their successful strategy against ships larger than Dvoras, sinking larger transport ships and gunboats at will. They also attacked many civilian supply ships baring supplies to the North and East.

The realization that the heavier Dvoras were no match for small, fast-moving and lightly crewed boats of the Sea Tigers in shallower seas came at a high cost. While the SBS experimented with light smaller craft including Combat Rubber Reconnaissance Craft (CRRCs) they were too small and slow and were highly ineffective against the Sea Tigers. At this point, the Sri Lanka Navy was at a dead end – they were out matched by the naval capabilities of the Sea Tigers.<sup>255</sup>

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252 See footnote 249.

253 Comments presented at interviews by ADM Wasantha Karrannagoda, former commander of the Sri Lanka Navy.

254 The numbers are based on a defense ministry publication ([http://www.defence.lk/news/20110801\\_Conf.pdf](http://www.defence.lk/news/20110801_Conf.pdf)) and shows only naval vessels completely destroyed by attacks. Some underwater suicide divers are known to have used submersibles vehicles. Most Black tigers that took part in naval battles were carders who were casualties from land warfare.

255 See footnote 249.

This changed in 2006, when a Sri Lanka Navy SBS operation, led by then LCDR Dissanayake Mudiyansele Bandula Dissanayake discovered the LTTE's hideout at which they were manufacturing the small 16-foot boats they used for their wolf pack attacks. It was at this location that the SBS found a boat buried in the ground, which was later recovered and brought to the Naval dockyard at Trincomalee. The Naval engineers reverse engineered a version of this boat, which was the first 16 foot Arrow Boat of the SLN. The small boat was fitted with a 12.7mm main gun, and a stern gun that was an Automatic Grenade Launcher (AGL). Two 115 horsepower outboard engines propelled it to speeds in excess of 25 knots. In addition, the boat was highly maneuverable. With the guidance and encouragement of then Commander of the SLN, VADM Wasantha Karannagoda, Navy engineers experimented with different configurations of the same base model.<sup>256</sup>

The result was two more versions of the Arrow Boat, the 18 footer and the highly successful version, the 23 foot Arrow Boat, which went into mass production. The 23-footer was manned by four person crew: a coxswain, main gunner, stern gunner and a side gunner. The boat was capable of being fitted with either a 12.7mm, 23mm, or 30mm main gun (some even were equipped with twin cannon versions); a 12.7mm or AGL stern gun; and two 7.62mm Chinese Multi-Purpose Machine Gun (MPMG) as side guns. Powered by two 250 horsepower engines, the boat boasted speeds of up to 35 knots.<sup>257</sup>

During the period from 2007 to 2009, 200 of these boats were produced and put into action by the Navy's dockyard in Welisara.<sup>258</sup> These boats, though small, were capable of operating in rough seas up to Sea State-4.<sup>259</sup> The boats' draft was significantly

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<sup>256</sup> See footnote 249.

<sup>257</sup> See footnote 249.

<sup>258</sup> By the end of 2009, the Navy's Dockyard in Walisara had completed 200 Arrow Boats. The Defense Secretary of Sri Lanka on 09/11/2008 put the 100th boat underway ceremonially. <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2008/09/14/sec02.asp>.

<sup>259</sup> Sea state is the general condition of the free surface on sea, with respect to wind, waves and swell at a certain location and moment.

lower, allowing mobility in extremely shallow waters. The boats' cross section was smaller in comparison to other craft, presenting a smaller target at sea, and making targeting from land almost impossible.

With the combination of high firepower and high maneuverability, these Arrow Boats had the ability to engage the smaller Sea Tiger boats on their own terms, by going close and fighting one on one.<sup>260</sup> The most credible evidence on the success of these small Arrow Boats were the acknowledgements given by the Sea Tigers themselves mentioning the hardships of countering the new fleet of small boats of the SLN.<sup>261</sup>

While the Arrow Boats provided the much-needed platform to counter the Sea Tigers, the Navy's training, operational and tactical doctrines also underwent drastic changes. The Navy introduced the operational concept of four layers of "defense barriers." This concept made use of the Navy's flagship and larger offshore vessels in the outer layer, followed by the Gun Boats, the Dvoras, and Arrow Boats who were the first line of defense in coastal waters. This layered system offered protection and offensive capability against the movements of the Sea Tigers. This methodology helped the prevention of the Sea Tigers supplying troops and equipment from ships in the international waters or from south India to the island. It further prevented the LTTE leadership from escaping the country by sea during the latter stages of the conflict.<sup>262</sup>

Tactically, the SBS developed a specific formation for using these Arrow Boats. The formation was led by one command boat that was either a Waverider<sup>263</sup> or IPC<sup>264</sup> equipped with Electro-Optical Devices (EOD) and radar capabilities. This command boat served as the eyes and ears of the smaller boats in patrol against the Sea Tiger movements. Since the smaller boats did not have radar capability and had only limited

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<sup>260</sup> These boats carried no armor to provide defense. The weight and other constraints of having armour proved to be less effective in the battle space.

<sup>261</sup> Authors and his colleagues interactions with captured and surrendered LTTE carders.

<sup>262</sup> See footnote 249.

<sup>263</sup> Waverider is a larger Inshore Patrol Craft designed and manufactured by the Navy Dockyard. This was modeled after the "Indumathi" craft captured from the LTTE.

<sup>264</sup> Inshore Patrol Craft or IPC are a craft smaller than the Dvora's manned by close to 12 which has the ability to carry RADAR and EOD systems.

visibility, specifically at nighttime when the boats had to rely on personal night vision goggles, the command boats role was vital in detecting and engaging the Sea Tigers. When encountering an enemy craft, some of the Arrow Boats would break off to engage the Sea Tigers depending of the craft they encountered. For larger craft that were operating individually, the Arrow Boats used the same swarming tactics of the Sea Tigers. For smaller enemy craft, the Arrow Boats would engage in close quarter fighting, sometimes closing within 20 meters of the enemy boats, in what could be compared to dogfights between fighter jets. The possibility that the Sea Tiger boats formations had suicide boats in their ranks made every attempt of close contact a deadly ordeal.<sup>265</sup>

A comprehensive study of the attack patterns of the Sea Tigers from 2006 to 2009 clearly indicates the success of the SLN's operations. In 2006, Sea Tigers engaged the Navy offensively more than 21 times. In 2007, the number of confrontations was twelve. In 2008, there were less than five confrontations, and finally by 2009, the Sea Tigers were defeated.<sup>266</sup>

While this irregular aspect was considered a key element in the victory of the war, and especially the sea born aspects of it. But Navy also contributed early on for the total success of the SLAF and the demise of the LTTE. The Navy as mentioned before was more of a brown water Navy. Its blue-water capability was if at all, was minimal. The LTTE exploited this failure of the Navy to patrol its own extended zone by operating its own fleet of transport shipping. These ships were key in LTTE's survival because they were supplying the much-needed military supplies to the LTTE.

The conventional maritime interdiction of the LTTE floating warehouses was a key measure in cutting the supply routes of the LTTE. The action of the Navy have been well documented by LCDR AAC Karunasena of the Sri Lanka Navy in his paper entitled "The Role of the Sri Lanka Navy in the Counterinsurgency Operation"<sup>267</sup> and in the

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<sup>265</sup> See footnote 249.

<sup>266</sup> The Sri Lankan Navy and Ministry of Defence has conducted studies of the attack patterns and capabilities of the LTTE.

<sup>267</sup> AAC Karunasena, "The Role of the Sri Lanka Navy in the Counterinsurgency Operation"(Final Research Paper, Joint Military Operations Department, Naval War College, 2011).

Master's thesis of Justin O. Smith entitled "Maritime Interdiction in Counterinsurgency: The role of the Sri Lankan Navy in the defeat of the Tamil Tigers," written while attending the Naval Postgraduate School.<sup>268</sup> This writing does not wish to reiterate what has already been said of the importance of this blue water naval activity.

#### **F. SPECIAL FORCES OPERATIONS CAPABILITY**

The force multiplier of the Sri Lanka military, the Special Operation Forces contributed to its learning and adapting immensely. The adherent culture of innovative thinking and risk-taking, the small unit operations abilities provided a ground for quick adaptations to the situation.

These include the SLAF Army Commando (CDO) Regiment, Special Force (SF) Regiment and the Sri Lanka Navy Special Boat Squadron (SBS). Collectively these units learned and perfected some of the most effective tactical capabilities, which helped the military meet the insurgent guerrilla techniques with their own guerilla or "anti-guerrilla" techniques.

One of the key capabilities developed and perfected was the ability to conduct deep infiltration operations into enemy held territory. The history of the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol troops (LRRP) goes back to 1996 when then Major D.R. Wijesiri, Commanding Officer of the 2nd SF regiment, requested for volunteers to conduct operations deep inside enemy held area. The volunteers were then selected based on physical and mental evaluation and the first team of 20 other ranks (enlisted) was established in Pranthan, where the 2nd SF regiments was based (26 October 1996).<sup>269</sup>

A team led by British SAS First Sergeant of Travel who conducted small team operations training for officers and others from SF and Commando Regiment trained these teams. Later U.S. Army Rangers conducted a Balance—Style course for a two teams of 12 each. Later an LRRP training course was locally initiated using instructors

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<sup>268</sup> Justin O. Smith, "Maritime Interdiction in Counterinsurgency: The role of the Sri Lankan Navy in the defeat of the Tamil Tigers" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2010).

<sup>269</sup> Author's personal communication with Col. Jayantha Rathnayake, one of the founding officers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> SF and former Commanding Officer of the 2nd SF regiment of the Sri Lanka Army.

from the initial teams by both the Commando training school and the Special Forces training school. The Sri Lanka Navy SBS troops were later invited to undergo these training and a team of LRRP was established in the Navy.<sup>270</sup>

The primary task of the LRRP was twofold, first, the elimination of high valued targets and second the real-time information gathering inside enemy territory. These troops also were trained to call in precise air raids on identified enemy locations. The success of the troops have been acknowledged not just by the military but also by the enemy, who considered the LRRP operations to be a number one concern, prompting LTTE leadership to introduce armored vehicles for its senior leaders of the LTTE. These operations successfully restricted the freedom of movement the LTTE leaders had inside their own territory. By doing so, they managed to further divide the population of the areas and the LTTE.<sup>271</sup>

The most successful guided air attack on the LTTE was the targeting of their Political wing leader SP Tamilchelvam. Brigadier Tamilchelvam was one of the key strategic planners and leaders of the LTTE, who, after suffering casualties, was appointed as the head of the Political wing. But, in 2008, aided by the LRRP this highly valued target was eliminated using precision bombs that was dropped by the SLAF Air Force inside LTTE held territory. The information and real time guidance provided by the troops on ground deep inside the enemy territory effectively assisted in the AF ability to target only the enemy bunker and avoid collateral damage. While this was the most successful operation because of the nature of the target, there were several other targets that the Air Force eliminated with the information and guidance provided by the LRRP troops.

Also these deep infiltration troops conducted high value targeting inside enemy territory by themselves. A notable operation was the elimination of Seelan, and Soosai, two main LTTE commanders. The ability to provide accurate information from within the enemy territory to the troop commanders advancing was also a key aspect allowing

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<sup>270</sup> See footnote 268; The author was also has operated as part of the SBS LRRP group.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

the commanders to create plans to hunt the LTTE while safeguarding the non combatant population inside these areas.

#### **G.     LESSEN COLLATERAL DAMAGE TO SAFEGUARD THE CIVILIANS**

One example of using SOF in place of heavy weapons and armour was the operations undertaken by the Commando's and SF of the 59<sup>th</sup> Division to capture the earth berms in Nandikadal No – Fire zones. The earth berms constructed by LTTE to halt the advance of the army, and to prevent the civilians they were holding as human shields from escaping was a key constraint for the military during the last phase of the operation. The civilian population was preventing the military from using aerial bombing or heavy artillery or rockets.<sup>272</sup>

The risk of using SOF at this terrain that provided no cover for the troops trying to advance on the earth boundaries meant that other than, in the cover of darkness in the night, the troops were “pickings at will” for the LTTE marksmen. Understanding the need to conduct this operation with minimal damage to and maximum recovery of the civilians, the Army resorted to the most risky and costly method available, SOF. Using the darkness as the only cover and suffering major casualties at the hands of the LTTE, the SOF managed to reach, overcome and secure the earth boundaries allowing a passage for the trapped civilian population to move from LTTE area to the security forces area. Also by attacking the land strip from the south and north simultaneously, the military effectively divided the remaining LTTE carders and finally managed to eliminate the LTTE completely.<sup>273</sup>

The Special Operation Forces capability clearly showcased the transformation the military was making to counter the LTTE. During the 2006–2009 time frame these operation took center stage as operations supported by conventional infantry rather than

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<sup>272</sup> Based on a Presentation on the topic of “Counterinsurgency in Sri Lanka” made to the Pakistan Military Academy by Lt.Col. Lakshan De Silva of the Sri Lanka Army while attending the Pakistan Military Staff College program. The said officer was attending Naval Postgraduate School during the time of this writing, allowing first hand experience sharing with the author. Also supplemented by author's own experience as a officer in the Sri Lanka Navy during this period and his personal communications with Officer and other ranks of the Sri Lanka Army, who served during this time period.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.



being operations to support the infantry. This was a key change in the attitude of the Military commanders planning operations signifying the acceptance of unconventional war tactics.

In concluding, this chapter should show the Sri Lanka military underwent a gradual change from a ceremonial force to a capable counterinsurgency force. The main reasons for this included the ability to learn from the mistakes of the past and to adapt to make the necessary changes. This was possible because of the changes that took place from the very top of the chain of command leading from the Commander-in-Chief to the bottom.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES**

### **A. ANALYSIS**

The preceding analysis discusses how political will power and the stability of the GoSL, changing international influences, and military strategy contributed to the demise of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam. It further highlights that the variables that contributed to the demise of the LTTE were a combination of unique and reproducible ones. This chapter intends to summarize the key findings of the study.

The ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka existed since Sri Lanka's independence. The real political power struggles, particularly in the post-1948 era, gave way to a further divide in the population between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamil. Fueled by perceptions of discriminations that resulted in violent actions and reprisals, the conflict between the GoSL and the LTTE began and ravaged the land for a period of nearly three decades. It destroyed the country in every sphere and caused a polarization of the ethnic groups, leaving behind a legacy of damage that tarnished the country and the people for years to come.

After the violations of a 2002 Cease Fire Agreement, the Sinhala majority demanded a "war for peace." The government, with a solid majority power of nearly two thirds in Parliament, successfully created a strong wave of Sri Lankan nationalism through an effective marketing campaign. The Rajapaksa administration guided the people to seek to liberate their land and the innocent Tamil people in the North and the East. All these factors together significantly changed the political climate in the country, providing a solid support of the COIN programs of the military.

Yet, while internal political dynamics are significant in understanding the rise and fall of the LTTE, the external political, social, and economical changes in the region affected the conflict and the COIN actions that were adapted. Since Sri Lanka's independence, India influenced not only the conflict in Sri Lanka but also each and every key sector. The country never sat passively, but has actively intervened in the internal

politics of Sri Lanka and also has intervened in the military affairs of the state. As a major regional power and the “big brother” of the region, this comes as no surprise. India and its southern state, Tamil Nadu, fed the primary and secondary waves of Tamil nationalism. Because the concept of a Tamil Homeland threatened the stability of the central government in India, India preferred the destabilization of Sri Lanka and its politics. Thus, it was India, who supported, trained, organized, and controlled the initial Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka, in hopes that by gaining control they would prevent the formation of a new federal state in its own territory.

Ultimately, the LTTE managed to break free of this control by India. The Indian military intervention was costly and was referred to as “India’s Vietnam.” The creation of proper channels of communication between India and Sri Lanka and the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Ghandi catalyzed Indian withdrawal from the island and left Sri Lanka to continue their military strategies without any Indian intervention and, on occasion, with Indian support.

This study also discussed how the Tamil Diaspora played a critical role as an international actor with regard to the conflict in Sri Lanka, and how the group actively extended support during the last decades of the war. The Tamil Diaspora, willingly and unwillingly, supported the LTTE and sustained its terrorist agendas over decades. Presently, in the absence of the LTTE, the Diaspora continues providing underground movements with support via their political campaigns against Sri Lanka (and its government) which they accomplish through putting pressure on the Western countries that they are living in. They have now gone on to form various other guises to their cause as they lobby throughout the international arena. It is speculated that they have acquired the support of many media institutions and politicians; this support is said to have been acquired through their wealth and their voting majority in the countries they now inhabit. The attacks on the US on September 11<sup>th</sup> was a critical turning point in this flow of funds and other support, and marked the downfall of the LTTE as a terrorist organization in the international arena. This is yet another example of how the global situations and actions taken by other sovereign states directly affected the future of the Sri Lankan conflict. However, with a majority of the developed states recognizing LTTE as a terrorist

organization, its financial and communication agenda was limited, leaving the LTTE vulnerable. Sri Lanka, from this political policy shift, managed to successfully obtain the support of India and other countries, such as the USA and the UK, against the LTTE and thereby limit the dissent and the further spread of the LTTE. The internal stability and loss of its ability to manipulate real politics in the international system were the two main variables of the COIN strategy that brought the end to the LTTE in 2009.

The LTTE's selected method of operation, a combination of guerrilla tactics and terrorist attacks, proved effective in the initial stages of the conflict because of the failures of the conventional-minded, ceremonial force of the Sri Lankan military. But with time the military managed to become a fast adapting organization capable of matching up to and finally finishing off the LTTE.

The clear change of strategy of the military was key in resolving the conflict. The military moved away from its annihilation strategy to attrition-based strategy that proved effective in diminishing the enemy's capability. Operationally, the military moved away from massive infantry advances to small group capabilities, which were more similar to the LTTE's operations. For example, one of the military's main shifts was to take into consideration the non-combatant population of the area. By interacting with them, the military managed to differentiate the population from the insurgents. It also successfully adopted the civil defense concept and engaged the civilian population against the enemy (the LTTE). By doing so the government managed to establish the CDF which took over the role of protection of the innocent non-combatant population in the threatened villages. With the CDF protecting the population and also assisting in the defensive role, the military was made available to continue with the offensive action. The LTTE's ability to hide among the population and be a true insurgent organization was thus limited. This was further damaging because the LTTE leadership also was adopting more conventional methods of attacks against the SLAF. The capabilities of the conventional SLAF was clearly unmatched by the LTTE. Another key change was the multiple lines of operations, which effectively eliminated the breathing space the LTTE had in previous military offensives.

Tactically, the SLAF special operation forces were game changers. They managed to match the insurgent guerilla tactics with their own counter-guerilla tactics. By targeting the insurgent commanders inside their own territory, the SOF managed to instill fear in the minds of the LTTE command and thereby the SOF limited the LTTE's freedom of movement.

Aided by its hierarchical structure and by gaining the control of the autonomous regions awarded to it by the CFA of 2002, the LTTE shifted their military organization and operations towards conventional basing. The ability of the Sri Lankan government to prevent terror attacks (by securing the capital and other key locations) was also key in sustaining the needed support for the military action.

The changes that the political and military establishments underwent from 2006 to 2009 emerged as the main theme of this study. This can be attributed to the fact that higher authorities were willing to study and learn from their past mistakes and to allow rapid change in the otherwise slow changing bureaucratic organizations of the government and military.

While external changes were critical, it should be noted that the government took advantage of the changes in the external environment. To do so the government and the military had to be adaptable. In looking at the Sri Lankan conflict, it can be seen that the political will and stability needed to engage the population was only achieved in 2006, after the current president came to power. With reference to Mao's insurgent fish in the water of people, the relevant population was, from the start, divided. The insurgents only had a small segment of the population from which they could draw support: the Tamil population in the North and East. In terms of drawing political support, the LTTE utilized the grievances of the Tamil population against the GOSL as propaganda against their opposition. But the current government's tactic to engage the population positively and the LTTE's own attempt to govern the population, after gaining the autonomous region in an oppressive way, broke the LTTE's connections with the Tamil population. Moreover, the LTTE, with the continuous loss of land to the Sri Lankan military, rapidly began to lose control of the political space.

The breakdown of external support, from both the shift in the international attitude against terrorists and the active disruption by Sri Lanka Navy, severely affected the LTTE. The dependence of the LTTE on this external support was near total. Finally, while the availability of voluntary sanctuary was still used in Tami Nadu, the actions of the Sri Lanka Navy made access impossible.

Most of what is discussed in this thesis is country and situation specific; however, the central theme of the success of the GoSL and SLAF is adaptation by learning. This is not unique and will serve any nation, government, or military that is looking to find a solution to a similar irregular threat.

For a majority of the states that are going through intra-state conflicts of similar forms, this provides a great lesson: mass mobilization of public and political support internally and externally can indeed fight any form of terrorism, but only if the states are willing to learn and adapt according to the changes in the conflict. To do so, states have to establish strong political stability and focus in order to continue in a selected strategy that will pave the way for success and catalyze an end to brutal armed conflict similar to the one between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE.

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